

Something Wicked This Way Comes (up for adoption)

by Xiaberri

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Summary: Years ago, Hicca discovered that there are monsters in this world. But not just her world-ours, too. Hicca's secret is that, ever since she was a child, she's been traveling back and forth between America and Berk, hunting monsters. But after the battle with the Red Death, she is thrown into America and trapped. Years later a new enemy comes to Berk, and her people need her again.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Hey guys! This is a new fanfic I thought up. It's not a sequel to any of my previous stories; this one is something completely different. But I'm still doing a gender swap. \*\***

**\*\*This is something that popped into my head one day. This is highly experimental, I'm not sure if I'll finish it if it doesn't work out. To my knowledge, no one else has written a fanfic quite like this. I hope this goes well. \*\***

My name is Hicca, and I hunt monsters.

Funny, right? You wouldn't expect someone with a name like that to hunt monsters, at least not successfully. Not to sound stuck up, but I'm the best at what I do. Well, technically I'm the only at what I do, at least to my knowledge. I've encountered my fair share of vampires and werewolves, pucks and peris, demons and faeriesâ€”

Yeah. I said faeries. The evil little shits are nothing like Tinker Bell or her friend the Tooth Fairy. Only some of them are vaguely humanoid, but the majority are ugly sons of bitches. Take goblins, for example, or trolls.

If you know who I am and where I'm from, you may be wondering how I know who Tinker Bell and the Tooth Fairy are. Well, hang on a minute. I'm getting to that part.

But for those of you who may not know, I grew up on a tiny island called Berk, inhabited by Vikings. I was born with more brains than brawn, which, when you live with a bunch of screaming apes brandishing weapons, is not a good thing for you. That's how I got my pathetic name. I'm an obvious disgrace.

But anyway, to the point—how did I become a monster hunter?

It all started when I was seven.

My father had left with several of the village's finest warriors for the annual meeting of the tribal chiefs. I was left with a woman named Lauri and her two sons, who were three and five years old. Lauri was kind to me and her kids would play with me, even if no one else in the village would. I liked them, and I was happy that I got to spend two weeks with them.

One night, her two boys and I had been playing on the kitchen table downstairs. We had this game where we would sit on top of it, which we weren't supposed to do, and play with wooden building blocks. Whenever we'd hear Lauri coming, we would jump down from the table as fast as we could, giggling when we weren't caught.

But on this particular night, we played for almost an hour and didn't once hear Lauri coming downstairs. Of course, being children, we didn't think anything about it. But then a drop of something fell from the ceiling to land on our little tower we'd made. We looked up, curious, and saw a large red spot spreading across the ceiling above our heads. Another red drop fell down, landing on my hand.

We were young and didn't realize what it was. We shouted for Lauri, but, receiving no answer, decided to go upstairs to find her.

And find her we did.

She hung from the rafters, strung up by her feet like a pig. She had been slashed open from the chest cavity all the way down. Blood dripped slowly, sickeningly splashing on the floor. Her intestines hung like slippery gray ropes, covering her face and making her almost unrecognizable. Her blonde hair dragged the floor as she rocked lazily back and forth, becoming covered in her own gore.

All of us stared in nauseated horror, unable to move. But something behind her caught my eye. Flicking my eyes up just a bit, I saw \_it.\_

It was certainly humanoid, but not human at all. It had glowing amber eyes like a snake. The mouth was round, with triangular fangs surrounding the lips on the inside. I saw them when it bared its teeth at me. The limbs were much too long for the body, giving the appearance of the thing hunching over. It took a step closer to us.

All of us opened our mouths and screamed. A feral roar drowned out our voices as the creature lunged. It grabbed the youngest boy by the hair and threw him against the wall, then sprouted long claws that slashed deep into the small boy's body, from the chest cavity down. Just like his mother.

The boy's brother screamed, but his scream quickly grew choked as the

long claws slashed his throat. Blood gurgled from his mouth while it simultaneously sprayed from his neck.

By this time, I'd made a mad dash for the door—but then the body of one of the boys flew over me, splattering me with blood, and crashed into the door, slamming it shut. I screamed and turned to run for the window, not caring that I could end up killing myself.

Somehow I made it. I jumped out the window, feeling claws cut across my back as the creature tried to grab me. By sheer luck, I landed on a couple of fish baskets, which cushioned my fall enough to keep me from breaking every bone in my body.

That doesn't mean it didn't hurt. I groaned and whimpered in pain as several other adults came running up to see what all the commotion was about. The creature must have escaped, because no one else saw it. I was the only surviving witness.

But do you think people believed me when I told them? Of course fucking not. They all tried to tell me it was an Outcast, or maybe a dragon since it escaped so quickly.

But I know what I saw. And that was a weight that I would carry with me for the rest of my life.

I found the Gate when I was eight. I named it the Gate because, well, it was like a gate to another place.

By this time I was firmly convinced of the existence of monsters in the world. Ever since that night when I was seven, I'd been able to see other supernatural creatures. I gave up trying to convince other people that I'd seen a demon in Lauri's house, or sprites in the woods, or when I'd seen a troll on one of my fishing trips with my father. I figured out that if I kept it up, people would start calling me crazy and I would get locked up in Gothi's basement.

So I began to recede from the outside world and into myself. I wrote down the things I saw in my journal, keeping a record of all the beings I now knew existed. I would walk out into the woods and keep walking until I nearly collapsed with exhaustion. I did this so frequently, I began packing a lunch to take with me so that I could be alone for longer.

One day, Gobber let me take the rest of the afternoon off from working in the forge. I grabbed a bag with some food and my journal, and headed into the woods. I walked until I hit unknown territory for me, so I was eager to explore.

I found a small cove after a few hours. It was quite lovely, with a clear pond in the middle and moss-covered rocks surrounding it. I decided that I would start coming here often, since it was hidden from view and had been difficult to find. It would be a nice place to have some privacy.

There was a cave opening at the back of the cove, which I entered curiously. Shafts of light filtered in through cracks in the rocks, casting a warm glow over the interior. But what was most interesting was the swirling white light at the back corner. It wasn't real flashy—just a cloud of what could have been bright sunlight, slowly swirling around and around as it hovered a foot off the ground.

Ever heard that phrase "Curiosity killed the cat"?

Well I hadn't, so I walked forward and studied the light without much fear or caution. It didn't look dangerous, it just looked cool.

So it was a great shock to me when I reached out to touch it that an invisible force clamped around my wrist like a vice and dragged me forward. There was the sensation of falling, and fear snatched the breath from my lungs as I tumbled through seemingly empty space.

Now, it'll take way too long to explain every detail of my experience, so I'll give you the Cliff Notes version.

I landed in your world. The twenty-first century. A world of big cities and cars and plastic and computers and twerking—you get the picture.

The other side of the Gate was located in the city of Mortem, Georgia. It was tucked far back in the city park, hidden among the trees in a pile of boulders, which was there for decoration. Unless you knew where to look, it would be impossible to find the crack between the rocks that led into another cave-like opening between and under the boulders.

That world was terrifying. The first time I went there, I didn't stick around for long before jumping back through the Gate and running home.

But the next day I went back—out of curiosity, or a morbid death wish, who knew? Every day I would go back to the Gate and study that world, slowly traveling farther and farther into it, but always running back home after a few hours.

Of course I stood out. Georgia is a southern state, so it was hot down there. But there I was, creeping around in primitive fur clothing and boots. Lucky for me, however, the first time I discovered Mortem, it was October. That meant Halloween. Halloween meant that I could get away with wearing weird-ass clothes since everyone assumed I was just another crazy kid who wore a costume every day of the month.

I spent months studying the place, getting braver and bolder as I started figuring out what everything was. I spent more time there and eventually learned how to blend in. I managed to get some clothes to change into every time I went, and I started talking to people I met. They all had weird accents, and their slang was like a completely different language. But I learned.

It wasn't long before I began seeing non-human creatures wandering around in that world. Of course, no one but me saw them. As usual.

I started going to the city library and doing research on mythology and folklore. It was hard to find any helpful information because every story, every myth was different. But I would compare them all and write down every consistency I could find, anything that was the same between five different myths about a creature. My journal filled up considerably.

I also started going to a dojo downtown and begged off free lessons from the instructor. It wasn't too hard. I was a cute little girl who stood there and cried as she told him all about how "Daddy beats up on Mommy, and I'm scared." The instructor wanted to call the police, but I kept him from doing that too. After about an hour of sniveling, shuffling my feet and giving him big doe eyes, the instructor finally agreed to give me lessons whenever I could come in.

Mortem became my second home. It was where I went whenever I needed to get away from Berk, to relieve some stress. I relieved stress by hunting monsters. There were plenty of bad ones in the city, and my lessons at the dojo helped to keep me alive. Every since that demon had killed Lauri and her kids, I'd vowed that I would hunt them down and put an end to them.

Of course, I had to be careful. I wasn't dumb enough to go chasing after every monster I saw. I kept myself working on the small ones first, until I had enough training at the dojo to be able to handle myself better.

As the years passed, I gained some fame in the supernatural community of Mortem. As it turns out, I wasn't the only human who knew about monsters, although there weren't many others. But I was the only one who hunted themâ€”and I wasn't even a teenager yet.

I started a business, of sorts. If anyone was having problems with a creature, I would solve the problemâ€”if you know what I mean. I advertised myself by word of mouth, and people in need of my services would have to meet me in an alley behind a bar. It wasn't the most efficient system, but it worked. I was able to charge hefty prices and get away with it, especially depending on how desperate the customer was. But after my work was done, they never complained about the high prices and thanked me profusely.

I thoroughly enjoyed a life where I had some respect for once.

**\*\*For those of you following my other fanfic, don't worry, I'm still working on it. But this idea fell into my head, and once I get an idea I just can't stop thinking about it until I act on it.\*\***

**\*\*Wish me luck! And I will accept all reviews, the good and the bad, so don't be afraid to express your opinions about this fanfic  
\*\***

## 2. Chapter 2

**\*\*Now, I realize that the Vikings would have spoken Norse, which is a dead language by now, but for the sake of this fanfic we're going to assume that English is the universal language.\*\***

**\*\*Hey, it'll be like Star Trek. All the aliens always spoke English.  
\*\***

I was fifteen when I found Toothless, my best friend in the world. When I found him, I spent less time in Mortem and more time flying with him. Those few months were one of the best times of my life.

But then the people of Berk found out about him. I tried to show them

what dragons were really like—“gods, I tried so hard to make them understand. But they didn't listen.

I can still remember yelling at my father as I tried to make him listen. I grabbed his arm, trying to get through to him. But he turned and cracked the back of his hand across my face, knocking me to the floor. He left a small cut under my left eye, which would turn to a scar.

There was no sign of regret on his face as he glared down at me and hissed, "You're not my daughter."

That hurt me more than anything.

Astro helped me get the other teens on a dragon before going after the Red Death. I was grateful for their help, but you can't erase years of abuse in just a few hours. I was afraid about what would happen after we killed the dragon, assuming we all survived. I highly doubted my father would take me back. Best case scenario, he would banish me instead of just having me executed for high treason. The teens probably wouldn't help me out much, either. For all I knew, they would go back to their old ways of abusing me.

When the teens and I got to Dragon Island, I dropped down onto the ship where Toothless was chained up. I don't remember what happened, exactly, but the next thing I knew the ships were all blown up. The force of the explosion shattered the chains restraining Toothless, and I didn't waste any time getting in the saddle. I remember hearing my father shouting my name as he ran up behind me, but we took off before he could reach us.

I was scared out of my mind as we battled the Red Death, but I did my best to swallow my fear. This was just another monster, I told myself. Just another monster that needed to be killed.

But that fear bubbled up nonstop when Toothless's tailfin snapped off. The last thing I remembered was the dragon's tail hurtling towards us, a spike of white-hot pain, and then nothing.

I came to slowly. When I opened my eyes, all I saw was darkness. Something strong was holding me tight, and the black wall next to me rose and fell slowly. I could hear a slow, steady beat emanating from it.

Then I realized that it was Toothless. He was clutching me in his paws, his wings wrapped around me. I stirred groggily, pain wracking my body. "Toothless," I slurred. I heard him moan, and he shifted so that he could lift his wing off of me. A clear, starry sky was suspended above me. A warm breeze rustled through the trees.

I blinked. Why was the sky so clear? Shouldn't it be choked with smoke and ash? And there were no trees on Dragon Island, only rocks. I heard the honking of cars in the distance.

Then it hit me: somehow, I'd been thrown back into Mortem. I must have been in the in the City Park, because where else would there be trees?

I heard voices approaching, and my heart began to beat a little faster. I needed help, but if they saw Toothless there was no telling

what they would do. Most humans who didn't know about the supernatural couldn't see any non-human creatures. Instead, reality distorted and they would see something completely different. Maybe if Toothless was in the sky he would look like a large bird, or a small plane to them. But I had no idea what they would see with him here. An overturned bus in the middle of the park? A giant dog? Whatever the case, it would raise a lot of questions that couldn't be answered.

"Toothless." Summoning all my strength, I raised a hand and placed it on his chest. "You need . . . to hide . . ." My throat burned. It was difficult to breathe.

Toothless crooned in protest. "Hide, Toothless," I whispered. "Please, hide." He reluctantly let me go. He licked my cheek one last time before turning and disappearing into the trees.

My eyes closed and my consciousness began to slip. The voices got closer, and then one person screamed. There were pounding footsteps, and then several people were surrounding me, trying to get me to talk, asking what had happened. I didn't have the strength to respond.

I have very little memory after that. I remember ending up in the hospital, with doctors and machines buzzing all around me. I woke up sometime later, with a nurse bending over me as she messed with the tubes and plastic contraptions all over my face and down my throat.

The next time I woke up, I was felt a little stronger. A doctor came to my room, followed by a cop. The cop asked a bunch of questions. They thought I was assaulted or attacked by an animal, although they had no idea what could have caused all the burns. I promptly lied to every question.

Over the course of the next few weeks, the doctor explained my condition to me—including the part where they were forced to amputate my leg. I was fitted with a new leg, which was very different from any prosthetic I'd seen on Berk, but it worked. I was soon able to sign myself out of the hospital.

The first thing I did was find Toothless. I walked far back into the park, where no one would be around, and called him.

A black blur shot out from the trees and knocked me to the ground. A slimy wet tongue ran all over my face, and I laughed as I hugged him back.

The two of us went back to the place where the Gate should be, but it wasn't there. I was surprised, but not that disappointed. I had no intention of going back to Berk anyway. But I did wonder how I'd ended up here after the fight, and why the Gate here had suddenly disappeared. Had the one on Berk disappeared, too? And how did they come into existence in the first place? That was a question I'd asked myself many times before. I'd done a lot of research, but found nothing.

I got a job at Starling, a bar downtown. I was the bartender. How did I get a job like that at age fifteen?

The owner was desperate. No one would work for him because was a temperamental asshole. But I'd worked for Vikings all my life, so this was almost normal for me. Plus, the ownerâ€”a Mr. Andersonâ€”had agreed to let me sleep in a back room instead of paying me a full salary, since I couldn't rent an apartment at my age.

Another thing about Starlingâ€”it's not for regular people, so to speak. It's a bar for paienâ€”another word for non-humans, members of the supernatural community. There were a couple of humans there, but mostly there were lots of paien creatures who were regulars. They all tried to intimidate me, since I was young and new to the area. But I didn't let them. I kept several sharp objects under the counter, which I found to be very helpful.

I also didn't tell anyone my real name, except for my closest friends I would make over the years. I lived under the name Xinia Fields. I didn't want anyone calling me "Hicca." I liked the name Xinia, and I wasn't about keep my original last name. I wasn't that person anymore.

All that took place five years ago.

I was twenty years old now. I was also mopping up a dead vodyanoi. He and a werewolf had gotten into it, and the wolf grabbed the salt shaker and smashed it over the vodyanoi's head. Salt and vodyanoi don't mix. Vodyanoi are human-sized, slimy leech creatures and weren't attractive in any state, form or fashion. They take to salt about the same way a garden slug doesâ€”not too damn well. The salt melted his ugly ass all over the bar.

After punching the wolf out and relieving him of his cash to cover the damage, I threw him out. I growled with irritation as I poured cleaning solution over the gooey, snot-like substance that oozed over the bar. "Why do the paien always have to kill each other in a bar?" I asked no one in particular. "It's annoying as hell, especially when I'm the one who has to clean it up!"

"Xinia!"

I groaned loudly and rolled my eyes. "The hell did I do now?" I hollered right back.

Mr. Anderson came out of the bathroom at the far corner, scowling. As far as I could tell, he was human. He was tall, in his thirties, dark haired, and had some stubble. If he wasn't human, he never let on.

"Come get these bitches out of my bar!" He jabbed his finger in the direction of the bathroom. The door had swung shut, but I could still hear bodies being thrown and various objects being smashed.

Snarling, I reached under the counter and grabbed the fire axe that was used frequently but never for fires, and stalked towards the bathroom. What was it about Mondays that always made the patrons go bat shit crazy? But hey, if they wanted to play "Here's Jonny!" the that was their call.

I kicked the door open, hollered "Heeeeere's Jonny!" at the top of my lungs and hefted the axe as I walked into a four-way bitch-fest



between two succubae, one lamia, and one widely grinning shirtless puck. From what I could tell, the succubae wanted payment for services rendered to the puck. The lamia had been taking a piss and simply wanted to eat the puck, since they're uncommon and the uncommon are generally considered a delicacy; and the puck was doing what all pucks do. He was skipping out on his bill, wreaking fucking havoc, and enjoying the hell out of himself.

Pucks are tricksters. They're clever, which you kind of have to be when you live several thousand years at a time. They're also vain. And they are entirely oversexed. Entirely. They would fuck anything and everythingâ€”shit, they would hump a tree stump if they were horny enough. I counted myself lucky that this one was wearing pants.

The two succubae, covered in glittering blue snake scales with smoky black and silver hair, grabbed the lamia and threw her into the mirror on the wall. The puck saved his own ass by hiding in a stall. The lamia crumpled to the floor, her dress shredded and her damp, stringy hair covering her face.

"Ladies," I drawled. I'd been living in the Deep South so long that I'd developed a southern accent. "You know the rules: Charging clients or eating clients"â€”no one cared whichâ€”"Is done in the alley outside the bar. Leeches and sex slurpers are no exception."

The leech remark pissed off the lamia and she lunged at me, round mouth opening wide as she hissed. I simply brought the axe up and sliced her head off.

The two succubae crouched in a wary stance, unsure as to whether I was going to kill them or not. I lowered the axe and raised a brow at them. "I'd haul-ass if I were you." One glanced back at the stall where the puck was cowering. "My patience is running short," I snapped. "Get the fuck out." They scurried out of the bathroom. "That means you too!" I shouted at the puck. He came out of the stall laughing. The front of his pants was bulging as he approached me, flashing a dazzling smile.

I whipped the axe around and put it under his chin. His smile didn't falter in the slightest. "I'm not in the mood," I snarled. He shrugged. "Another time maybe?" he chuckled and wagged his fingers at me as he exited the bar.

I rolled my eyes before surveying the damage done. Kicking the body at my feet, I swore under my breath. I was going to have a lot of cleaning up to do.

**\*\*So, what do you guys think? So far, so good? I hope so.\*\***

### 3. Chapter 3

Stoick stood outside the Great Hall, hands on his hips as he surveyed the village. It was close to midnight on Berk, but the village was alive and bustling with activity. The next day was the five-year anniversary of Hicca's triumph over the Red Death. Everyone was out and about, making plans and setting up for the festivities.

But, underneath the joy of remembering the day dragons and humans came together, there was the deep sadness that Hicca was not here. After the explosion, everyone had searched for hours, but there was no sign of Hicca or the Night Fury. They were forced to come to the inescapable conclusion that both of them were dead.

Stoick was hit the hardest with this news. He couldn't stop seeing himself strike his daughter and watching her fall to the ground, blood welling from a cut beneath her eye. He couldn't stop seeing her heart break as he disowned her, the tears she struggled to hold back. Every time he closed his eyes, that was all he saw. Every time he went to sleep, his nightmares were filled only with various images of her deathâ€”burning to ashes, being crushed in the dragon's jaws . . . her mangled body lying somewhere unreachable . . . .

And when he'd seen her mount the dragon . . . no, her dragonâ€”Toothlessâ€”he'd tried to catch up to her before she took off, tried to apologize. But why would she have stopped for him? She probably thought he was going to kill her.

Stoick came close to suicide in the year that followed her death. He kept telling himself that he didn't deserve to live. He prayed to the gods every time he went to sleep, prayed that they wouldn't let him wake up again. But he still opened his eyes the next morning. He opened his eyes to another day filled with agony and guilt.

It was mostly Gobber who helped him get through that time, though the whole village was there for him. All of them grieved alongside him. They also felt guilty for the way they'd treated her, though not nearly as much as Stoick.

One day, Stoick finally realized that he had to be there for his village. He had to do his job, protect his people, work to keep their alliance with the dragons strong. But every day of every year that followed, there was still a hole in his chest where he kept his pain and grief. He was never really happy after that fateful day.

"Chief!"

Stoick was snapped out of his reverie. He blinked and looked down to see Astro running up the steps of the Great Hall. Stoick managed a smile. "Hello, Astro. What do you need?"

"Chief, there are ships approaching. They don't fly any colors." Stoick's stomach dropped. Pirates.

"Everyone, grab your weapons!" He roared over the village. "Ready for battle! Pirates approach!"

There was a lot of commotion as people scrambled to obey. Several warriors stationed themselves around the village, cutting off entry from the outside. Women ushered their children inside before grabbing their weapons and joining their husbands. The dragons hid themselves from view, ready to pounce on the enemy at a moment's notice.

Stoick stood at the docks, along with Gobber and the teens as they watched the ships approaching. It had been a while since Berk had encountered pirates or Outcasts, but lately there had been reports from other clans that a mysterious fleet of ships had been attacking

islands and destroying villages. Stoick had a pretty good guess that this was that same fleet.

The group of about five ships stopped a little ways out from Berk. Stoick frowned as he saw a single longboat being lowered into the water and begin approaching the island. What were they doing? If they were pirates they would have come all the way up to the docks before attacking. So why were they sending only one longboat? If they were coming in peace, they should have been flying a white flag.

Gobber leaned towards Stoick. "What do you want us to do?" he asked.

"Wait to see what they do before we attack," Stoick murmured back. "Let's find out what they want."

After what seemed like hours of anxious waiting, the boat arrived at the docks. It was occupied by three men, all of them big, hairy, and intimidating. But none of them had weapons.

One man stepped onto the docks and nodded to the group facing him. "I am Mace," he said, "And my men and I have no intention of harming your people."

Stoick simply stared as the other two men stood behind Mace. Mace introduced them as Warthog and Snakelard. "What do you want?" Stoick demanded without preamble.

"\_Tsk tsk.\_ Such bad manners!" Mace smiled. His teeth were all black. "I am here on behalf of Iepetus the Demon Master. He has a message for you, Stoick the Vast, Chief of Berk." Stoick stiffened. How did this man know his name?

"His message is this," Mace continued, "Surrender to us, and your lives will be spared. If you do not, my Master will unleash Hell on this island. He will summon his demons and you will all be slaughtered like animals. Do you understand?"

Rage boiled up inside Stoick. "I will never surrender to your master!" he spat.

Mace grinned maliciously. "You have two weeks to change your mind." With that, the tree men climbed back into their boat and left Berk. Soon the fleet disappeared into the horizon.

"What the Hel?" Astro demanded. He looked just as confused and angry as the rest of them. "Who is Iepetus the Demon Master?"

"Let's ask Gothi," Gobber suggested. "Maybe she'll know."

A few minutes later, Stoick, Gobber, and the teens were all gathered in Gothi's house. The old woman was drawing in the sand pallet on her floor, telling them what she knew about Iepetus.

"She says he is an old enemy," Gobber translated. "She was very young when he threatened just about every tribe in this region. There were never any survivors of his attacks, so no one knew exactly what it was that was killing the villagers. They could have been killed by dragons, but even dragons did not attack as viciously as these people were." He looked up at her. "Gothi, how did everyone survive?" he

asked.

Gothi swiped her staff back and forth across the sand, clearing it. Then she began drawing again.

"She says a man named Charlie helped them." He stopped and looked up at Gothi. "Charlie? What kind of name is that?"

Gothi wacked him over the head with her staff.

"Gah!" he rubbed his head. "Alright, sorry." Gobber looked down and began to read again. "She says that Charlie stood up to Iepetus and, somehow, managed to make him flee. No one really knows how he did it, but it worked."

"But now Iepetus is back again," Snotlout interjected. "His name is Iepetus \_the Demon Master.\_ What if that means he actually summons demons like Mace said he would?"

"Don't be stupid!" Fishlegs said. "Demons don't exist." He hesitated. "Right?"

Everyone looked at Gothi. The look on her face said it all.

"So demons \_do\_ exist?" Tuffnut said. "Awesome!"

"No, \_not\_ awesome!" Astro said. "We need to figure out how to get rid of Iepetus again, \_especially\_ if he can summon demons!"

"How about we find this Charlie guy?" Fishlegs suggested. "I mean, assuming he's still alive."

Everyone turned to Stoick, who had been silent the whole time. He thought about Charlie. If he had been able to get rid of Iepetus the first time, maybe he could do it again. Normally, Stoick's pride wouldn't have allowed him to consider help from another person. But when it came to the safety of his village, he was willing to accept all the help he could get. He looked at Gothi. "Where can we find Charlie?"

The old woman began drawing in the sand.

\*\*For those of you who have been leaving reviews, thanks so much! They're super helpful and it's always nice to have some encouragement. \*\*

\*\*Please continue leaving reviews! I love you all! :) \*\*

#### 4. Chapter 4

\*\*Hey guys! I am SO sorry this took so long to get posted. I've been unbelievably busy, but I finally found some down time and I just sat here for three hours banging out this chapter on my laptop. To make up for the long wait, I made this chapter longer than usual. I hope it turned out well. \*\*

\*\*As always, I love you guys, please follow and review! I need some feedback on my stories! \*\*

I stood behind the bar at Starling as I mixed up a Frog's Ass for a vampire. Vampires do eat and drink, you know. Their diet isn't strictly blood. Vampires are born, not made, and they are living creatures, not the creepy dead things from Twilight. They breathe, just like their hearts beat. This one's name was Harvey. He was a close friend of mine and had been coming to the bar for years. The fact that he was one of the few patrons who didn't try to kill me when I got hired was very nice.

Harvey was drumming his fingers on the bar in mock irritation. "And threeâ€”daysâ€”later."

"Oh, shut up!" But I was smiling as I poured his usual six shots and slid them over to him. He began to work his way through them, knocking them back one by one.

I looked up as the door opened. I threw my hands into the air with a big grin when I saw who it was. "Maddy!"

The girl was a bit shorter and heftier than me. Her hair was naturally blonde, but she'd dyed the underneath layers of it black. She was brown-eyed and always had a cheerful spring in her step. I'd met Maddy in my earlier days of coming to Mortem, back when we were both kids. She was a werewolf, though it had taken me a while to gain her trust with this information.

Maddy grinned back at me. "Xi!" she shouted. I hopped easily over the counter and we hugged. Maddy was my best friendâ€”after Toothless, of course. The two of us met at the skate park downtown. In fact, that was where I met most of my friends.

Back when I was new to this world, at eight or nine years old, I would walk all over town and watch the strange things twenty-first century people did. I used to stop at the skate park and watch the local kids. They all had skateboards and would fly up and down the ramps, kick-flip down the stairs, slide over the railingsâ€”it was extremely fascinating and looked like fun. Eventually the kids noticed that I kept coming back every day, and they did the first genuinely nice thing anyone had ever done for me: they taught me how to skate.

At first, I was terrified. I was sure that they were going to pull some horrible prank on me that would result in pain and embarrassment. But to my great surprise, they didn't. They never made fun of how much of an armature I was. They never called me weak or stupid. They never laughed at me when I fell. They simply helped me to my feet and offered endless encouragement while tending to my skinned hands and knees. Those kids were my first real family.

When Maddy and I finally separated, she bent down to pet Toothless, who had come over as soon as she entered the bar. He was in the form of a black Labrador. Before you get confused, let me explain.

A few years ago I'd done a job for a guy named Adam Garner. Adam wasn't an actual wizard or anything, but he did have a gift with certain types of magic. We called him the Potions Master because he could make just about anything as long as he had the right tools and ingredients.

But he didn't have enough money to pay me. So instead he made

something for me: A small emerald, about the size of a nickel, that he'd enchanted so that the possessor could take on the form of an animal. He'd set it into a leather strap that would expand and shrink to compensate for the transformation. Adam had meant it to look like a choker-type necklace whenever I wore it, but instead I used it as a collar and put it on Toothless. As long as Toothless was wearing the collar, he could take on the form of a black Lab—"granted, he was a little large for a Lab, but no one would ever suspect what he truly was.

Adam was also the one who helped me make another tailfin for Toothless whenever he was in his dragon form. There weren't exactly many forges in Mortem, so it took us a while to get the right materials and get everything put together. Toothless also had to practice carrying the saddle and tailfin with him whenever he shifted into his Lab form. Otherwise, everything would fall off and we would have a big mess to deal with.

Toothless's tongue lolled out of his mouth as he rolled over onto his back, Maddy rubbing his belly. She laughed and shook her head. "You're so spoiled!"

"Yep," I agreed, "Rotten to the bone."

Toothless gave me a reproachful look. I simply grinned and nudged him with my foot. "Go watch the booze like you're supposed to, spoiled creature."

He huffed in irritation before getting up and trotting behind the counter, where he popped a squat in front of the wall of alcohol. Patrons were always trying to get free booze, and I found that keeping a menacing canine in the way was a very effective deterrent.

"Where's Niko?" I asked Maddy.

"He wanted to come hang out today, but he had to work late at the dojo."

I frowned in disappointment. "That sucks." Niko was five years older than me. He had been one of the students at the dojo I'd started going to in childhood, which he now had a job at. When we met he had taken me under his wing. He saw me as his little sister—which was cool, because I looked at him as an older brother. Sometimes we even told other people that we were actually related.

"You want anything?" I asked as I moved back behind the counter.

Maddy sat down on a bar stool. "Just my usual."

"Coming right up." A few minutes later I was handing her a Tequila Sunrise.

"So are you doing a job tonight?" Maddy asked as she took a sip.

"Yeah." I set to wiping down the countertop one last time. "I'm to drive down to the park. There's a vampire that wants me to get his girlfriend back. She was kidnapped by a couple of trolls."

"Who's his girlfriend?"

"I don't know, some succubae chick who wasn't smart enough to not cross that crappy bridge on her way home." The bridge I was referring to stretched over the river on the outer edge of town. Most humans stayed away from it because the wood was rotting and unstable. Most paian stayed away because they knew trolls liked that bridge. Snatching victims was quick and easy, since everyone would assume the person had simply fallen into the river and either drowned or cracked their head open on the rocks. The trolls would grab their victim, then high-tail it deep into the park woods where they could hide while they ate their meal. The vampire was hoping his bae would still be alive, but I knew she was probably long gone by now. However, I'd still get paid if I killed the trolls. Why he couldn't go get the girl hisself, I don't know. Maybe he really didn't care that much about her, or maybe he simply wanted to keep his suit clean.

I finished wiping down the bar and cleaned off the rest of the tables that weren't in use, then took the trash out to the dumpster in the back alley.

When I came back, Maddy had just about finished her drink. "Want to come with me?" I asked. "I'll split the paycheck with you."

"Yeah, sure." She emptied the glass and handed it to me, which I quickly washed and put away.

I turned to the vampire. "You want to come, Harvey?"

"Nah," he responded. "I'll sit this one out."

"'K." I looked up at the clock on the wall, drumming my fingers as I watched the second hand tick. Three . . . two . . . eight o'clock, on the dot. "Bye!" I shouted at Mr. Anderson as I headed towards the door, Maddy and Toothless right behind me.

"Hey, where you goin'?" he demanded. "Come clean up this fucker's mess!"

"Hell no," I hollered. Without turning around, I raised one hand in a wave. "It's the end of my shift. I'm gone!"

He kept yelling at me, but I ignored him and continued out the door. I walked over to my car and got in, unlocking the door for Maddy. I opened the back door for Toothless, and he hopped in.

"You know," she began as I backed the car out, "You should really get a Ferrari."

"A Ferrari?" I laughed as I pulled the car out onto the street. "I can't afford no damn Ferrari."

"With all the jobs you do, don't you get a pretty nice sized salary? And you always get paid in cash and under the counter, so no taxes."

"Well, yeah, but still. I can't afford a Ferrari, much as I'd like to. Plus they aren't very inconspicuous."

Maddy laughed. "When have you ever been inconspicuous?"

I thought about that, then shrugged. "Okay, good point."

Twenty minutes later I was parking the car on the side of the road, next to the trees. We'd have a little walking to do. I didn't like to leave my car close to the action where it could get damaged.

Maddy and I got out, and Toothless climbed across the driver's seat from the back and hopped to the ground. I smiled and scratched his ears. "Ready to go?"

He barked in response, tongue hanging out as he panted.

After a two minute walk, we reached the raggedy wooden bridge. My vampire client was standing on solid ground, looking impatient. He was one of the preppier vampires. He wore a very expensive three-piece suit, shiny shoes, and a Rolex glittered on his wrist. His dark eyes matched his perfectly manicured hair; pitch black against white flesh.

"It's about time," he growled when we walked up. He jutted his chin at Maddy. "Who's this?"

Her eyes glowed amber for a moment, turning to that of a wolf. "A friend," she said shortly.

The corner of my mouth twisted slightly. "Show me the money."

He glared, but reached into his breast pocket and produced a wad of bills. "Ten grand, like I promised. You get it afterwards."

"You give me half now, and the other half after the job is done."

He raised an eyebrow. "Fair enough." He counted through the money and then held out a sum to me. I took it from him and counted it again.

"Oh, honestly!" the vampire said, insulted.

I put the cash away and smiled sweetly. "It's nothing personal. It's just good business."

He rolled his eyes as we walked past him, towards the bridge. We stopped at the edge. "There any trolls around?" I asked both Maddy and Toothless. The two of them lifted their noses and sniffed. Maddy wrinkled her nose. "Ugh," she said, "They aren't here right now, but they sure do stink to high heaven."

"Can you tell which way they went?"

Toothless immediately trotted forward and started over the bridge. I called at him to be careful, then followed quickly.

The wood screeched and groaned underneath our feet, even cracking in a few places. But as long as we stepped lightly and kept moving, we were fine. When we reached the other side of the bridge, Toothless paused for just a second to sample the air, then trotted south into the woods.



It was dark and I could hardly see anything. But Maddy had much better night vision than me and I trusted her to tell me when something was in my path. I also used my other senses, which had improved greatlyâ€"kind of a must when you have this sort of job.

It wasn't too long before I started smelling smoke. It could be a hiker's campfireâ€"or it could be the troll's.

Firelight began seeping through the trees. The three of us slowed down and crept silently towards the troll's squat site. Maddy's eyes began reflecting the light as they glowed amber, her teeth and nails slightly elongated. She shifted into a blonde wolf whose shoulder blades came up to my waist, with massive fangs and claws. She curled her lip as we stalked forward until we could see what the trolls were up to.

The average troll is nineteen feet tall. They all have rough skin that mimics the terrain, so that they can hide easily when waiting for prey. These trolls were naked except for a ratty loincloth/diaper thing. The three of them were squatting around a bonfire. Cast off to the side I could see a pile of bones, picked clean except for a few stray pieces of skin or fat. One piece of flesh had a tattoo on it.

I made a face and looked around at the rest of the troll's camp. Movement caught my eye on the other side of the camp. In the shadows, just outside the ring of firelight, were two people. They were bound to a tree and gagged, both struggling as the trolls began finishing off the meal in their hands. They belched loudly and roared, and their next two victims flinched in fear.

Maddy and I exchanged silent words with our eyes, forming a plan. We both nodded and I began to circle around to the hostages. Toothless circled in the other direction, coming up behind the trolls. Maddy stepped boldly out into the firelight.

The trolls roared in surprise at her sudden and frightening appearance. I don't know if they'd ever seen a werewolf before, but if they had apparently they didn't remember their dangerous capabilities. All three trolls lunged for her at once, hoping for another quick snack. Maddy barked and lunged straight for one's face, biting and clawing. Blood sprayed and the troll fell back in pain and fear.

Toothless shifted back into his full dragon form. He didn't bother trying to get off a plasma blast in such close proximity. Instead he flew at one of the trolls and went straight for its throat.

I left them to it and ran to help the two victims. Both were women, and both were crying as they struggled against their bonds. "Hold still," I said sharply as I came up. I held up my knife. "I'm gonna cut you loose, but don't run. We don't want you getting lost or captured by something else." They nodded, mascara running down their cheeks. I quickly cut them free and they ripped the gags out of their mouth. They started to thank me, but I was already running to help Maddy and Toothless.

The third troll was standing still, wondering which comrade he should help first. Trolls aren't exactly the brightest bulb in the box.

I ran as sheathed my knife. Reaching over my shoulder I drew my katana, which was slung across my back. I ran up behind the troll and stabbed his calf. With a roar he fell to one knee, and I bounded up his back and up onto his shoulders. He lifted his hands and began swatting at me, nearly knocking me off.

I grabbed onto his earlobe in an effort to hang on, then swung myself forward and closer to the jugular vein. With a quick slash of my sword, I opened it up and his life force began spewing out.

I quickly jumped off and landed in a roll, coming up standing. The troll was clutching desperately at his throat as his own heart betrayed him, pumping out every last drop of blood. With a mighty crash, he hit the ground, gurgled, and all movement ceased.

Toothless and Maddy had done a pretty good job themselves. Both their trolls fell dead to the ground. We regrouped and Maddy shifted back to her human form. She cracked her neck and grinned. "That was fun," she said. "We need to do that again."

I grinned back at her. "For sure." I reached up and patted Toothless's now-scaly neck. "You okay, bud? No injuries?"

He shook his head, making his ears flap. His eyes were wide and excited. It had been a while since he had been in his own form, and he was having an adrenaline rush. "It's okay, we'll definitely fly later. I'm excited too."

"What were those things?"

I turned toward the source of the timid voice. The two girls were still cowering next to the tree, afraid to come near us.

"Trolls," I said simply.

"T-trolls?" the blonde-headed girl asked. Her friend simply shivered. "But trolls aren't real."

"They are now," I said, gesturing to the dead bodies. "Are y'all okay?"

"I-I guess," said the blonde girl. "I mean, I hope so."

I turned to the other girl. "What about you?"

She didn't say anything.

"Hello?" I walked towards her, concerned about her mental health. "Are you in there?"

She smiled, and her eyes turned completely black—iris, whites, and all. I stopped in my tracks. "Oh, shit." Demon.

The woman laughed, and the blonde girl stumbled away from her in fear.

"Something's coming," the girl said. "Something's coming and you can't stop it."

"What's coming?" Maddy demanded.

"My master. But he is not coming here first." She looked directly at me. "He is coming to Berk."

That hit me like a ton of bricks. My breath escaped me, and my vision blurred a moment. I blinked hard. "\_What?\_"

"He is coming to Berk and he will kill everyone!" She laughed, and as she did so she turned to black smoke. The smoke swirled around us, choking us and whipping our hair—and then it was gone.

## 5. Chapter 5

They'd been flying for three days before Stoick and the teens finally came to the island they sought.

Gothi's directions had been to fly south until they reached a saddle-shaped island that was rumored to be home to a wizard. Stoick didn't believe in the existence of wizards, but Gothi was sure that this had to be Charlie.

Since the island was farther south of Berk, it had warmer weather and a more lush terrain. The group of six circled the island, scanning for any signs of human life. It was hard to see through the thick trees, but eventually Astro spotted a clearing. The group flew down and landed cautiously.

On one side of the clearing was a crystal clear lake, surrounded by a number of lovely plants that were unfamiliar to Stoick. A few waterfowl glided lazily across the surface. On the other side was a log cabin. It was small and quaint, a single-story house.

"You think that's Charlie's house?" Astro asked as he dismounted Stormfly.

"Maybe," Stoick said. Slowly, he approached the house and stopped in front of the door. But before he could knock, the door flew open. Stoick reeled back and made to grab his weapon, but froze when he saw the person standing in the doorway.

It was a smiling young woman. She was pretty, although she was clearly not a Viking. She was small and petite, with short blonde hair and hazel eyes. She blinked glittery blue eyelids, her lips painted bright red.

Her clothes were very odd, too. She wore tight-fitting pants made of a strange blue material. Her shirt was bright red to match her lips. There were no sleeves, only straps that went over her shoulders. It tightly hugged her body, and the neckline was low-cut and showed a large amount of her chest.

By Viking standards, her outfit was wildly inappropriate.

The girl noticed their stares. "They're called skinny jeans and a camisole," she said, her voice tinged with irritation. Then she smiled again. "You must be Stoick. My dad's been expecting you." She looked over her shoulder and yelled, "Dad! Stoick's here!"

"Well, Juliet, let him in!" came a male's voice from inside the house. "And his friends, too!"

Juliet opened the door wider and stepped aside, gesturing for them to enter. Stoick hesitated for a moment before stepping inside. His eyes widened and he gasped as he took in the interior. Contrary to the small cabin seen outside, this was a mansion. Looking straight up, he could see that there were several stories to the house, at least five. There were long hallways and many staircases and doorways. Too many than was possible for that quaint little cabin. \_How?\_ Stoick thought.

As Astro and the teens filed in, each of them went through the same reaction as Stoick had upon seeing this impossible occurrence.

"Are you impressed? I used an expansion spell to do that."

The group turned. The source of the voice was a man who appeared to be middle-aged, with dark hair touched by a few streaks of gray. He had hazel eyes just like his daughter, although he was much taller and muscular. What Stoick found strange was that he was clean-shaven. Most men prided themselves on their beards. A beard was the sign of being a man, and they always let their beards grow out to the fullest.

"My name is Charlie," the man introduced himself, "And this is my daughter, Juliet." The girl smiled and wagged her fingers in a wave.

"I've been waiting for you, Stoick," Charlie said.

"How could you possibly know we were coming? And how do you know my name?" Stoick asked, frowning with distrust.

"Because I had a vision," the man said simply. "I'm what some people call a Seer, or a psychic. I can catch brief glimpses of the future. I saw you coming."

Stoick wasn't at all sure how to respond. This man was like no one he'd ever met before.

Juliet lightly slapped her father's arm. "You're freaking them out," she chided.

Charlie chuckled. "You're right, I'm sorry. I guess we have some important issues to discuss. Come."

Stoick and the teens followed Charlie and Juliet down a long hallway and through a pair of large oak doors. The walls of the room they entered were covered with full bookshelves. At the far end of the room there was a fireplace, a small table, and three couches.

"Please, have a seat." Charlie gestured to the benches.

"I'll stand, thank you." Stoick said sharply.

"So will we," Astro said, stepping up beside Stoick. "I want to know what's going on, and who you are."

Charlie shrugged and sat down with his back to the fireplace, and Juliet stood next to him. "Well, my name is Charlie. I don't have a title or a last name. Just plain, simple Charlie. Some of the stories you may have heard are not trueâ€”I am not a wizard. I am a peris. One of the oldest and most powerful of my kind."

"Wait, what's a peris?" Snoutlout asked.

Charlie smiled mysteriously. "There are many speculations as to what we are, exactly. But the most popular one is that we are a half-angle and half-demon hybrid. "

The group just stared at him, but Charlie continued as if this was completely normal. "Anyway," he said, "I was the one who defeated Iepetus all those years ago. I never believed he was actually dead, but I had hoped that he would be weakened and torn to the point of no return." He sighed mournfully. "Evidently I was wrong."

"How did you defeat him?" Astro asked.

Charlie looked up at them, his expression deadly serious. "That is a secret that no mortal can ever know."

"Well, we need to know!" Stoick said angrily. "Otherwise all of my people will die!"

"I'm sorry, but there is no way I can tellâ€”"

Stoick snapped. He was tight strung and angry. He had already lost his daughter, and now because of this man he could possibly lose more of his people? Stoick lunged towards him and roared, "Tell me or I swear to the gods I \_will\_ kill you!"

Suddenly Charlie sprang to his feet. He grew a foot, and his eyes began to glow as they narrowed and hardened. His features stayed the sameâ€”and yet, at the same time, they changed and sharpened, becoming beautiful but frightening. And two large, white feathered wings bloomed from behind his back and stretched to their full length of a fourteen foot wingspan. "\_DO NOT\_ DARE \_THREATEN ME, MORTAL!\_" Charlie's voice boomed, shaking the entire house. "\_YOU HAVE NO IDEA THE FULL MAGNITUDE OF THE FORCES YOU ARE PLAYING WITH, BOY!\_"

Stoick stumbled backwards in terror. \_Oh gods\_, he thought, \_he's going to kill me.\_ "I'm sorry!" he gasped. "I'm sorry!"

Juliet calmly placed a hand on her father's shoulder. The creature before them cast one last piercing glare before returning to normal. His eyes ceased to glow, his frighteningly beautiful features softened. Slowly his wings lowered and he folded them behind his back, where they disappeared once again.

Charlie closed his eyes and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "I'm sorry. But you do have to understand, if I gave you that secret, it could end up destroying the world."

"Then how are we supposed to kill Iepetus?" Astro asked timidly.

Charlie remained silent. Then his eyes opened and he sucked in a breath, looking down at Juliet.

"Did you just have a vision?" she asked. He nodded, looking a bit shocked. "I saw how Iepetus will be killed," he said. Then he turned and looked Stoick dead in the eyes. "It was your daughter."

Everyone, including Juliet, froze at once.

"M-my daughter?" Stoick stuttered, his heart beating irregularly. "H-how? She isâ€"she is gone."

"I'm afraid not," Charlie said.

"Hicca and I are friends," Juliet spoke up. "Well, she goes by Xinia now, butâ€""

"\_What?"\_ the entire group chorused at once.

Juliet sighed. "More explaining. Alright, you should really sit down for this." The group complied, and Juliet launched into a long explanation.

She told them all she knew about how Hicca. She knew that Hicca had somehow found a way to enter another world and how she hunted monsters for a living. Juliet knew that Hicca had befriended Toothless and that they'd killed the Red Deathâ€"and that, somehow, she'd inadvertently become trapped in that other world.

"She doesn't like to talk about her past," Juliet said, "so I don't know everything. But I know that her name used to be Hicca Horrendous Haddock III, but she changed it to Xinia Fields because she said that she wasn't that person anymore." Juliet looked Stoick and the teens with a hardened expression. "And I know that she never wants to go back to Berk because of the way the people there always treated her."

Juliet's story set Stoick's world spinning wildly on its axis. Tears welled up in his eyes as he thought about his lost daughter. Could she really be alive?

"Once I offered to bring her back to this world," Juliet was saying. "Dad knows how to create a temporary Gate between the worlds, and it could have been a way for her to go back to Berk. But she didn't want to come back. At all. After that, I never pushed the subject."

"Oh!" Charlie seemed to remember something. "Xinia contacted me last night."

"She did?" Juliet asked, surprised.

Charlie reached into his pocket and produced a folded piece of paper, which he handed to her. "This is from her," he explained.

Juliet bit her lip as she read. "I need to go talk to her. Can you make me a Gate?"

"Of course," Charlie said, standing.

"Wait," Stoick interrupted. "Are you going to America?"

"Yes," Juliet said.

"Then I want to come with you." He stood up. "I need to speak to my daughter."

Juliet stared at him. "Do you realize that she really wants nothing to do with you?" she asked.

"I need to apologize to her," Stoick said. "I need to let her know how much I love her and that I want her back." He looked down at his feet. "I \_have\_ to," he said quietly.

Juliet looked to her father. Charlie looked as if he thought this wasn't a good idea, but all he said was, "I guess it wouldn't be right for us to stop you."

"If the Chief is going, so am I," Astro said. "I also have some things I need to say to her."

"So do I," Fishlegs spoke up.

"Me too," Snotlout added.

"Yeah, I guess we do too," Ruffnut said.

Stoick smiled gratefully at the teens before turning back to Charlie. "How do we find her?"

\* \* \*

><p>A couple of hours later, Stoick and the teens were ready to go. Juliet had given them a crash course on what the other world was like, and what to expect. She'd given them new clothes, too to help them blend in. She'd tried to get Stoick to shave his beard, but he'd adamantly refused. Juliet had tried to tell him that he would come off as creepy to other people, because most men in that world did not grow such long, thick beards. But shaving was the one thing Stoick was not going to do.<p>

"Ready to go?" Charlie asked when everything was done.

"Yep," Juliet said. "We're ready."

"Alright." Charlie closed his eyes and concentrated. His spread his hands, and from them grew a cloud of swirling light. "Go."

"Come on!" Juliet stepped into the cloud and vanished. After a moment's hesitation, Stoick and the teens followed suit.

\*\*I hope this was good and not corny. Please review!\*\*

## 6. Chapter 6

"You can't keep fixating on this!"

Maddy had been yelling at me ever since we'd gotten back to my apartment from our troll job, half an hour ago. "Demons lie, you know that!"

"I know, but they'll be just as quick to tell the truth when they know it'll hurt you!" I paced back and forth, grabbing fistfuls of my hair as my emotions were at war inside of me. On one hand, I could care less about what happened to Berk. But my conscience was on the other hand, and while I was hurt and angry with the people of Berk, I didn't want them to die.

Toothless trotted up to me and leaned against my legs, looking up at me with big eyes. Maddy grabbed my shoulders, forcing me to look at her. "Xi, listen to me. You can't keep dwelling on what that bitch said. Maybe she was telling the truth, but the more likely scenario was that she was lying. Now I know you're not the kind of person who can sit around and do nothing, so why don't we try to contact Juliet's dad? You know, Charlie? He can give you some honest answers."

I chewed my lip and tried to quell the turmoil in my chest. "Fine," I said. "Okay. Fine." I went into the kitchen and shuffled through some drawers until I found a notepad and a lighter Juliet had given me. I wrote out a quick note about the demon and what she'd said, and signed my name at the bottom. When I was done I folded the paper and wrote Charlie's name on it. Then I held up the lighter and burned the paper.

A few years ago Juliet had given me a lighter that I could use to contact anyone, wherever they were. All you had to do was write your message with their name on it and burn the paper with the lighter. Since the two of them were peris they tended to move around a lot, so this was a very useful tool.

I dropped the flaming paper in the sink and watched it burn. When it had all turned to ash, I turned the faucet on and rinsed the remnants down the drain. I turned around and leaned against the edge of the kitchen counter, trying to control my breathing. Toothless sat down and began licking my hand in an effort to comfort me. Maddy leaned against the counter next to me. "Are you okay?" she asked.

"No."

"Hey, it'll be fine. We'll figure things out." When I didn't say anything, she grinned. "You want me to braid your hair like we're twelve?"

I cracked a smile. "Yeah, let's have a sleepover."

"Wanna watch a chick flick?"

"Hell no!"

"What about a Paranormal Activity marathon?"

"Even though they suck?"

"We can complain about how much they suck the whole time we're watching."

I finally grinned. "I'll get the popcorn, you get the movies."

"Now we're talkin'!" Maddy hollered as she ran into my living



room.

\* \* \*

><p>The next afternoon Maddy and I woke up curled on the couch, covered in a blanket, popcorn, and several empty beer cans. Toothless was draped across my lap, snoring. The TV was still on, nothing but a blue screen. I sat up and groaned. "Why did we do that?" I asked no one in particular. "I'm disgusted with myself."<p>

"Well," Maddy yawned, "At least we both have the night shift." She also worked at a bar downtown, near Starling.

"True," I sighed. I scratched Toothless's ears and gently pushed him out of my lap. "Alright, I'm gonna take a shower. Feel free to raid my closet if you want some clean clothes."

"Girl, you know I can't fit in any of your clothes. You're too skinny."

I grinned. "That's why I broke into your apartment and stole some of your clothes."

"That was you?!\_" Maddy shouted after me as I ran into the bathroom, laughing.

\* \* \*

><p>Even though Juliet had told them about America, nothing could have really prepared Stoick and the teens for this world.<p>

It was the wee hours of the morning, and yet the city was lit up almost like day. There were buildings far taller than they'd even thought possible. There were big, honking machines that Juliet called "cars" flying all over the place. There were so many strange people, all of them unique and none of them as similar to each other as the people on Berk were. The group tried not to gape as Juliet led them casually through the city, explaining what everything was and teaching them how to act in certain conditions.

Juliet led them through thick crowds along the sidewalk until they came to a part of town where there seemed to be practically no one. The girl darted into an alley and pulled out a small, rectangular device from her pocket. She touched the surface a few times before holding it up to her ear. "It's a cell phone," she explained. "It allows you to contact other people from a long distance away." She broke off and began to speak into the device. "Hey, Xi, it's Juliet." Stoick's heart leaped as he realized that she was speaking to his daughter.

"My dad got the note you sent. I have some things to tell you. Where are you now? I can come find you." She paused, and Stoick assumed Hicca was speaking. "No, I don't mind! That'll work. See you in a few. Bye, side ho!" She lowered the phone and ended the call. "You guys up for some walking? We're gonna go meet Xi at one of her jobs."

"Why did you call her 'side ho'?" Snotlout asked.

Juliet grinned. "It's been a running joke between our girls. Maybe

I'll tell you the story behind it sometime."

\* \* \*

><p>I got off work at two A.M., and Toothless and I took on my next job on our own. A client had called yesterday, saying that he had a revenant problem.<p>

Revenants are not undead zombies. In fact, they were very much alive and had never been human. They simply had good camouflage. Is that a corpse? Should we investigate? By the time that second question was out, the revenant had already eaten your legâ€"unfortunately for you.

I drove to the address the client had given me, and found it was an abandoned seven-story building of some kind. It looked like it could have been a storehouse and one point. I gathered a few weapons from the backseat and the two of us headed inside.

Upon entering, the storehouse was pitch black. The only light was coming from the open door, and since it was two in the morning that still meant it was barely enough to see by. I propped the door open with a cinder block and moved quickly out of the way in order to avoid making myself an easy target.

Toothless grew a few inches as he morphed slightly, taking on the form of a large dog covered in scales. I placed one hand on his back, trusting him to protect me until my eyes adjusted. He didn't make a sound, although I felt him raise his hackles.

After a few moments my eyes had adjusted to the darkness and I glanced quickly around. I doubted there was a light switch anywhere, but it didn't hurt to keep an eye out. I didn't see any revenants, but there were plenty of empty carcasses. I wrinkled my nose against the stench and waved flies away from my face. Very carefully, I reached up and drew my katana from where it was slung across my back.

I whirled around as I heard a viscous snarl. A black mass hurtled towards me in the dark, and I quickly brought my sword up. The thing was already in the air and had no time to dodge. It impaled itself on the blade.

I lowered the blade and shook it until the body slid off. But my eyes narrowed as I glimpsed fur in the moonlight. Nudging the body with my foot, I moved it closer to the door so I could see better.

\_Hang on, \_I thought. \_That ain't a revenant.\_ It was a werewolf.

Werewolves will generally travel and live together in Packs. Sometimes there were a few exceptions, like Maddy and a few others I knew. They had never lived in a Pack and had no desire to. Packs were \_supposed\_ to be tight knit groups that always looked out for each other. But, of course, many times there would be rivalries within them and this would lead to what I can only describe as civil war. Two males would fight for the Alpha position, and members would be forced to pick a side.

It's basically just like Congress.

I wondered whether this one was a loner, or if I was trespassing on a Pack's territory.

Suddenly, howls split the air, echoing off the walls of the storehouse.

"Guess that answers that question," I muttered.

Dozens of glowing pairs of eyes appeared as werewolves slunk into view. The door was slammed shut, blocking off an escape route. There was a possibility that I could fight my way out of this, but that wasn't a very large percentage.

Without hesitation, I jumped on Toothless's back. He wasn't fully transformed, as there wouldn't be enough room to fly in, but he was big enough to carry me. I held on tight as he lurched forward, thundering past the glowing eyes and towards the stairs at the far end of the room. The howls kept following us, and I knew that the only way to get out of this was to get to the roof where Toothless and I could fly away.

We finally came to the rooftop door and Toothless crashed through it easily. And we would have made it if there hadn't been more wolves up there.

A wall of teeth, claws, and fur slammed into Toothless's side and sent us both sprawling, my sword skittering across the roof. I rolled quickly to my feet, but was immediately grabbed by the throat and hoisted into the air. I found myself face to face with "well, shit."

Face to two more faces. Both were sticking out of the same body.

The clawed grip of a massive, two-headed werewolf only tightened as I struggled. "Hello, Hicca," the left head said. How did it know my name? I tried to shout for Toothless.

"Oh dear, we're terribly sorry," said the right head.

"But your little friend is indisposed at the moment," the left head finished. I couldn't see behind them, but I could hear growls and barks that must have been from Toothless and the wolves.

"Stop . . . doing that," I gurgled. "It's . . . weird." I fumbled at my waistband as I tried to pull my gun.

"What's this?" the two headed thing began to walk casually towards the edge of the roof. It held me out over the pavement, seven stories below, and shook me like a rag doll. "A toy." The twin maws stretched in laughter. "You threaten us with a toy. Shall we make you eat your toy? Ram it down your throat inch by inch? Or shall we put it elsewhere? Not inch by inch, but all at once."

Oh, shit.

I needed no encouragement as my numb fingers finally got the Desert Eagle free of its holster. Moving quickly, I shoved the barrel into its chest and squeezed the trigger.

The shots didn't kill him. Nope. It's never that easy, is it? But at

least it was enough to knock him back, dislodging his grip on my throat.

And then I was falling towards the pavement.

\* \* \*

><p>The strange group of Vikings attempting to look like normal Americans had been following Juliet around for the past hour, listening to her chatter about the twenty-first century. Stoick was doing his best not to get frustrated with the girl. She was taking them to Hicca, and he knew he needed to be appreciative.<p>

But did it really have to take an entire hour to get there?

They finally came to a remote part of the city, with old, run-down buildings and rusty machinery.

"That's where Xinia said she was headed," Juliet said as a seven-story building came into sight. "She may or may not already be done with her job." She paused and turned to look at them. "Maybe you guys should stay back here until I can talk to her first."

Stoick wanted to object, but he knew it probably wouldn't be a good idea to just show up all of a sudden. That would end badly.

Suddenly a roar cut through the air, on top of three loud bangs. Juliet whirled around and they all looked towards the building they were heading to. It was dark, but Stoick could just make out two silhouettes on the roof. One was a massive, bulky creature that Stoick had never seen before. The other was smaller, more feminine. The creature was stumbling back, and the woman fell as if dropped. Stoick gasped, fearing she would fall to her death, but she grabbed the edge of the roof just in time and dangled precariously by one hand.

Juliet cursed. "Stay here!" she shouted, and transformed the same way her father had. She grew taller, wings blossomed from behind her back, her eyes glowed and her features sharpened. She took off, the wind from her powerful wings knocking them to the ground as she flew towards the building.

\* \* \*

><p>My shoulder shrieked in protest as I hung on to the gutter for dear life. Grunting, I swung my other arm up and grabbed the edge. My feet searched for purchase on the brick wall, until my toe found a crack or a ledge to push on. Slowly I began to haul myself back up.<p>

The two-headed thing kindly helped me the rest of the way. Two massive black claws clamped down on my forearms and hoisted me up. Then, with the malicious glee of a child with a fly, the wolf began to pull.

I began to cry out in pain as my arms threatened to leave their sockets. I thought I was done forâ€”until Juliet tackled the thing like an angry bull.

She flew in out of nowhere and sent us both tumbling to the rooftop.

Lying on my side, I saw Juliet on top of the thing in her peris form. She was swinging punches like you wouldn't believe, knocking the twin heads repeatedly against each other and the cement. I figured she could handle herself, so I went to help Toothless.

My dragon was all but pinned to the ground by snarling, drooling wolves. The very sight of it pissed me off to no fucking end. Scooping up my sword from where it had fallen, I charged into the fray with a scream.

I slashed and hacked and spun as I took out wolves left and right. I didn't care if I was trespassing on their territory. You try to mess with my dragon? Better start writing an obituary.

Finally the remaining wolves got the hint and backed off. There were only five or six left, and they all growled warily. I growled right back and slashed my sword horizontally in front of them. They barked and scampered back through the door and down the stairs.

I ran to Toothless and looked him over, my heart pounding in fear for my friend. But aside from a few bites and bruises, he appeared to be fine. I hugged him fiercely and he licked my cheek.

Suddenly I remembered Juliet and turned around to check on her. But there was no need to worry. She was still sitting on top of the two-headed wolf swinging punches. Both skulls had caved in long ago, and the creature was still.

"Juliet?" I called across the roof. "I think you got him."

She finally stopped swinging and stood up, shifting back into her human form. She casually shook the blood off her hands as she approached. Toothless panted happily and bounded over to her. She smiled and patted his head. "You two okay?" she asked.

"Physically, yeah. But I'm pissed."

"Why?"

"My client said he had a revenant problem." I jabbed a finger at the dead wolves. "Them look like revenants to you?"

She scowled. "Son of a bitch set you up."

"Yeah, he did. I'm gonna have to track him down." I walked over to where I'd dropped my Desert Eagle and picked it up, tucking it back in its holster. I shook the loose blood off my katana, but would still need to clean it before it when back in its sheath. "Anyway," I said, calming myself down slightly. "What'd you want to talk to me about?"

Juliet bit her lip, suddenly looking very nervous. "Um," she began, "You may want to sit down for this."

**\*\*Please review!\*\***

## 7. Chapter 7

"You can't be serious." I stared at Juliet. "You can't possibly be

serious."

"I am serious. I'm so sorry, I know how much you hate them, but they insisted on coming. They just want to talk."

I lowered my head into my hands. There was a cold lump in my throat.

Toothless lay down next to me. I looked down at him, and he seemed to offer encouragement through his eyes. He licked my hand and leaned his head against my arm, a comforting weight.

I took one shuddering breath and looked up at Juliet. "Okay. I'll go."

\* \* \*

><p>"You think we should have gone with her?" Astro was asking. "What if she needs help?"<p>

"I think she'll be fine," Stoick said, thinking back to how powerful Juliet's father's rage had been when it was directed at himself.

Suddenly, a black mass crashed down in front of them, seemingly out of nowhere. The group leaped back in surprised terror—and then they saw what it was.

It was a Night Fury. It was Toothless.

And Hicca was on his back.

She had a hard look on her face, her forest green eye piercing through the darkness like knives. Her dark hair was pulled back in a ponytail, but Stoick could make out streaks of bright blue, artificially dyed. As she slid out of the saddle, they saw that her clothes were also covered in blood. Her black clothing was splashed with the substance, as were her hands. Her boots were all but coated in crimson. She gripped a strange looking, bloodstained sword. Her throat was beginning to bruise, and there was a cut on her temple that was dripping down the side of her face. Other various injuries littered her body, and part of her shirt had been ripped to shreds, exposing bloodied skin.

"Oh, gods," Stoick whispered. "Hicca . . . what happened to you?"

\* \* \*

><p>He made to move closer to me, but I stepped back.<p>

"You mean the blood?" I asked, trying to hide the fact that I was on the verge of a panic attack. "Not mine. Most of it, anyway." I licked my lips nervously. Juliet alighted next to me as I studied them warily, and Toothless curled his tail around me and growled protectively. Stoick was looking at me with a pained expression. Behind him were all the teens. "Why are you here?" I finally asked.

"I . . . I had to see you."

"We all did." Astro said as he stepped forward. So long ago, I'd had a crush on him. He had matured over the years and looked hotter. But as I thought about it, I realized that that attraction was gone.

"Why do you want to see me? You all hate me."

"No!" Stoick said, his face white. "We don't hate you!" His jaw worked up and down, as if he wanted to speak but didn't know what to say. "I love you," he finally said. "You're my daughter."

I snorted in disgust. "That's funny. As I recall, you gave up that right five years ago."

"I know," he said, on the verge of tears. "I know. And it was a mistake—one of the biggest I've ever made. I love you, Hicca. Please give me another chance."

I scowled. "Bullshit." Then, without another word, I climbed into Toothless's saddle and took off.

\* \* \*

><p>Stoick said nothing as Hicca climbed onto Toothless's back and took off. What was there to say?<p>

Juliet remained behind, regarding them with an expression of pity. "You guys want to go back to Berk now?"

"No," Stoick said. "I still want to try . . . try to just talk to her."

"You just did talk to her."

"I mean an actual conversation."

Juliet sighed. "Alright, fine. But you guys are gonna have to come back to my dad's house for a while. You can sleep there until morning." She frowned. "Well, afternoon. Technically it's morning now." Then she led them back to the Gate to her father's house.

\* \* \*

><p>I had the afternoon shift today.<p>

I considered skipping out and taking a sick day, but decided against it. I didn't have a job until the weekend, and there was no point in doing nothing. So, I hauled my ass out of bed, dressed, and went to work.

I found Niko waiting at the bar. I was very happy to see him and rushed over to get a hug. "Hi Nik!"

"Hey Xi." He grinned as he hugged me back. I gave his ponytail an affectionate tug. He stepped back to look at me. "Juliet told us what happened last night." He didn't try sound sympathetic. He was stating it as a simple fact.

"Yeah," I said dully.

"Are you gonna be okay?"

"I'll be fine."

"Good." With that he sat down and didn't say anymore about it.

And the day was going pretty good until they showed up again.

Juliet came in first during the evening. I could tell by the look on her face who was coming in next. All she said to me was, "I am so sorry." I was a little pissed, but I can never stay mad at my friends for long.

The Vikings, on the other hand . . .

Stoick and the teens walked in nervously and came towards the bar. I simply rolled my eyes. "Oh, great," I said. "They're following me." Toothless was in his Lab form, and he stood up from his place in front of the booze shelf and growled at them.

Astro stepped forward. "Hicca, please!"

He didn't get to finish because I grabbed a fistful of his hair and smashed his face into the countertop. I held his head down and leaned closer. "Don't you ever call me that," I hissed, loud enough for the rest of the group to hear. "Understand?"

"Y-yes," he stuttered, trying to stand back up. I roughly let him go. He stumbled back, bringing his hands up to his broken and bloody nose. I calmly took a bottle of cleaning solution from under the counter and washed his blood off the bar.

When I looked back up, Astro had a handful of bar napkins on his face and was keeping his gaze off me. Stoick just looked stunned, Fishlegs looked terrified, and Snotlout and the twins were grinning nonstop. "That was awesome!" Snotlout said.

"Do it to me!" Tuffnut said excitedly. Ruffnut punched him in the face. The blow rocked him back, but Tuffnut remained standing. "You didn't do it as good!" he said indignantly.

I cracked a smile. I couldn't help it. I'd forgotten how stupid they were, and it was amusing.

Niko, from his seat a few feet away from them, laughed when he saw me. "There's a smile!"

"Shut up!" I threw the bottle of cleaning solution at his face, but he caught it easily and threw it back. I also caught it and slammed it back in its place under the counter. "You're such a dick."

"Yes, but you love me anyway."

"Unfortunately."

\* \* \*

><p>Stoick watched the exchange between Hicca and the blond man with interest. They were giving each other a hard time on the surface, yet underneath it Stoick could sense that the two were very close. They



acted almost like . . . siblings.<p>

As he looked around at the rest of the bar, Stoick realized something was missing. "Where's Toothless?" he asked. They hadn't seen the dragon outside. Maybe he was hiding elsewhere in town? But Stoick doubted that Hicca would go anywhere without him.

Hicca pointed towards the large black dog that was growling at them. "That's him right there."

The group was silent.

"Uh," Snotlout said uncertainly. "Are you sure?"

The dog barked at them ferociously.

"Hey! Sit!" Hicca snapped her fingers at the dog. It looked at her and sat. It ceased growling, but it continued to give them a disturbing death glare.

"Yeah," Hicca said irritably, "I'm sure."

Stoick didn't ask.

\* \* \*

><p>"Alright," Juliet said to me. "We have some things to discuss other than them." She pointed at the Vikings.<p>

"And what's that?" I asked.

"You know that guy the demon you ran into the other night mentioned? Iepetus the Demon Master?"

"Yeah, what do you know about him?" I lowered my voice. "Is it true? Is he really going to Berk?"

Juliet only nodded.

"Oh, God." I held my head in my hands.

"And also . . . my dad had a vision."

I looked up at her. "I sense that this is gonna be bad news for me."

"He saw you kill Iepetus."

I sat up. "Well, that's good news, isn't it?"

"Except you were in Berk's world when you did it."

"\_Shit!\_" I kicked the bar in frustration. "What the hell does that mean?"

Juliet sighed. "As far as I can tell, it means you have to go back to Berk, at least for a little while, so you can kill him. Otherwise he'll wipe out everyone in that world and then move onto this one."

I kicked the bar again. I was starting to realize what that meant. If I didn't go back to Berk, thousands of people were going to die. If I did go back to Berk, I would be stuck in the same vicinity as the people who made my life hell were. The selfish choice and the unselfish choice. "Oh, fuck me."

At least I got the pleasure of seeing the look on Stoick's face at my language.

"Alright, fine," I said grumpily. "I'll go back to Berk."

Stoick looked stunned and delighted at the same time. "Y-you will?"

"But only for a little while. I plan to kill what's-his-face and get out."

His face fell, and I didn't feel the least bit guilty.

I turned back to Juliet. "Did your dad say how I killed Iepetus?"

"With your sword, I guess."

"You guess?"

"Hey, his visions aren't exactly clear or coherent. He just knows you killed Iepetus in that world."

I slapped the sides of my thighs in frustration. "Great! All I have to do is go with a bunch of people who made my life hell to a place that I swore I would never go back to and figure out how to kill a guy who is the master of demons and still make it out alive and sane. What could possibly go wrong?"

"I love you, Xi," Juliet grinned.

I sighed, my anger dying down. "Love you too, side ho."

"Girls are weird," Tuffnut muttered.

At the end of my shift I gathered my things and headed towards the door with Juliet and the Vikings, Toothless and Niko at my side. I stopped when I got to the door. "Anderson!" I shouted towards the back. "I'm gonna be gone for a while!"

"How long!" came the loud reply.

"I don't know!" I hollered. "Like a few weeks maybe! I guess we'll both find out!"

My boss finally stormed into view. "You can't leave for that long!" he shouted. "If you do, I'll fire you!"

I began to walk through the door. "No you won't!"

"And why wouldn't I?!"

"Because I'm the only one crazy enough to work for you!\_"

Juliet and Niko were absolutely dying with laughter when I got outside. The Vikings were just trying to hide grins, wondering if it was safe to laugh.

"Do the two of you always yell at each other?" Juliet asked between giggles.

"Yeah. Don't ask me why, we just do."

I was about to move on when a fireball ripped through the air in front of me, inches from my face. I reeled back from the heat and drew my katana, looking around for the source.

A man strolled up to us, one hand in his pocket, the other holding a ball of fire. A warlock.

"Where are you going, Hicca?" he asked, using the tone of a teacher scolding a child. "Obviously you didn't interpret my warning very well."

"What warning?" I demandedâ€"and then I recognized his voice. He was the client who had set me up last night, back at the storehouse. "What the hell do you want, man? How do you know my name?"

"I work for Iepetus." He smirked at me. "I'm afraid I can't let you go back to Berk."

"Oh, really?" I said, taking on a battle stance. Juliet transformed and Niko drew his gun. Toothless grew into his full dragon form. "And how are you going to stop me?"

The smirk faltered, but only for a moment. Then he hurled his ball of fire, which grew and expanded as it flew at us. But Toothless swiped the ball out of the air with a fireproof wing and aimed a shot at the warlock. The guy conjured an energy shield and deflected the shot, then yanked something from around his neck. He threw it on the ground and brought his shield up to surround his body like a bubble.

A second later, the object exploded.

The blast knocked us all to the ground, and Toothless automatically covered me with his body.

I coughed. "Augh, Toothless, get off me." I pushed against his chest. "I'm fine!" He reluctantly moved over, and I stood up. "That was . . . a smoke bomb?" Everyone appeared to be fine, only shaken a little. "What the hell is up with a smoke bomb?" I asked the warlock.

The guy's face was white, and fear showed plainly on his face. "But . . . I don't understand . . . Iepetus said . . ."

"Oh," I drew the word out as understanding dawned on me. "So we weren't the only ones to get set up." I looked at Nik. "Should we kill him?"

He considered. "Probably. Otherwise he'll run back to his master and try to hurt more people."

"Good enough for me." I drew my gun and splattered the warlock's brains.

"Why did you do that?" Fishlegs stood looking at the dead body, shocked.

"Because he's probably got a lab full of organs pried from virgins," I said as I tucked the Desert Eagle back in my belt.

"Virgins?" he asked nervously.

"Virgins are pure. I've hunted warlocks before, they like to use the blood and the organs of virgins when they perform Dark Magic."

"Doesn't that mean you should stay away from them?"

I let out a bitter laugh. "Ha! Nope. That ship sailed a long time ago."

Stoick gave me a hard look. "What are you saying?"

"I'm saying I'm not a virgin. Haven't been since I was sixteen."

His mouth fell open. "Sixteen?" he demanded. "That young, and out of wedlock?!"

"Well it's not like anyone ever taught me to value my virginity, to value myself!" I spat angrily. "No one ever taught me that I was too good to have sex with a stranger I met in a bar!"

Stoick closed his mouth and cast his gaze downwards, suddenly looking very ashamed. Awkward silence followed.

Snotlout cleared his throat. "So, um, Hicâ€"I mean Xinia," he revised quickly, "What's that?" he pointed to the Desert Eagle in my hand.

I pushed my anger aside for now. "It's a gun," I explained. "It's like a crossbow, but a lot more powerful." I ejected the magazine and held it up to show him. "It shoots metal bullets instead of arrows. They travel faster than the speed of sound and pack a helluva punch."

"Ooh, can I have one?"

I replaced the magazine and tucked the gun back in its holster. "No. You'd end up killing yourself."

"Oh, come on!"

I ignored him and turned to Juliet. "Before we go back to Berk I'm gonna need to get some things from my apartment."

"Okay, I'll take them back to the park where my dad made the Gate. Meet us there when you're done."

" 'K." I climbed into Toothless's saddle and we took off.

When I got back to my apartment I packed two duffle bagsâ€"one with weapons and ammo, the other with clothes. I refused to wear Berkian attire.

Before I left, I called Maddy. I told her what went down today and where I was headed now.

"I'm coming with you," she said resolutely.

"What? No!" I objected. "It's too dangerous!"

"Oh, really?" she said sarcastically. "And inviting me to go with you to kill paian isn't?"

"This is different!"

"No, it's not. I'm coming with you, and there's nothing you can do about it." She giggled. "And I betcha Niko is coming too." Then she hung up on me.

Fifteen minutes later, Toothless and I arrived at the park where Maddy, Niko, and the others were waiting for me. "Maddy, you whore," I said as I dismounted. She only laughed.

"I'm coâ€œ"

"No!" I interrupted Niko. "You are not coming too!"

"Try and stop me," he challenged, a smile playing across his mouth.

"And I'll be there too," Juliet said.

I threw my hands in the air. "Oh, good Lord. If y'all die, I'm not responsible. And when we meet again in another life or whatever, I swear I will give you hell."

The three of them only laughed.

Juliet led us into the trees, out of sight from prying eyes. I recognized a certain pile of boulders. "Hey," I said, "That's where my Gate used to be."

"Your Gate?" Juliet asked.

"It's the one I always used as a kid. It disappeared when I was fifteen."

"Wait," Astro stopped. "How long have you been coming to this world?"

I thought about it. "Since I was eight."

The Vikings stared at me. I only shrugged and continued to follow Juliet.

We finally came to a familiar swirling ball of light. "Who wants to go first?" Juliet asked.

"We will," Niko said as he and Maddy approached it. "That way Xi can't lock us out somehow."

I only rolled my eyes as they stepped through.

The Vikings went next. Then it was just me and Juliet. I looked at her with uncertainty. She nodded encouragingly. "We'll be there for you," she said quietly.

I nodded, took a deep breath, and Toothless and I plunged back into Berk.

**\*\*Please review!\*\***

## 8. Chapter 8

**\*\*Someone had a question about Toothless shapeshifting. The deal is, Hicca was given a necklace a while back that was enchanted to give the wearer the ability to shift into an animalistic form. She gave it to Toothless, who wears it like a collar. But since he is already an animal, he can turn into a black Labrador dog. That way, he can hide the fact that he's a dragon and can go everywhere with Hicca/Xinia while she's in Mortem. Because, can you really imagine a dragon walking around the big city?\*\***

**\*\*Hope that cleared some things up :)\*\***

We came out in the woods.

It was spring, so the trees were in full bloom. A warm breeze trickled by, carrying the smell of fresh pine. In the distance I could hear the roar of dragons. A few columns of smoke rose above the trees from the village.

"Ready?" Juliet asked quietly.

"No," I replied, my stomach doing flip-flops. "Let's just get this over with."

Stoick and the teens went first, and the rest of us followed. Toothless walked along beside me, his wings twitching with a mixture of nervousness and excitement.

The woods finally opened up, and we walked into the village.

Everyone stopped moving, even the dragons. The villages were staring at me, slack-jawed. I don't know if they recognized me, but they recognized Toothless. Every eye was trained on me, and it seemed as if the entire island was holding its breath.

Then just about all of the dragons tackled me.

Oh, don't worry, they weren't attacking me. They simply knew who I was and were very happy to see me again.

I laughed as several tons of scaly bodies knocked me to the ground and the dragons began trying to lick me. It was gross and difficult to breathe, but I kept laughing anyway. It had been five years since I'd seen the other dragons, so this was just as exciting for me.

Finally Toothless stepped in and got them off of me, shooing them away. But they always stayed nearby, flitting around with

giddiness.

"Stoick?"

I looked over to see Gobber moving towards Stoick, while keeping his eyes trained on me. "What in Thor's name is going on?"

Stoick looked back at me and smiled. "I found my daughter."

I walked up to my old mentor. "Hi, Gobber."

The blacksmith looked me up and down, as if he were afraid of me. "Hicca? That really you?"

"Yeah, it's me."

He swept me into a bone-crushing hug. "Odin's beard, girl," his voice caught. "We all thought you were dead."

I hugged him back. Gobber was the only one I really missed, him being the closest thing I ever had to a father. "I know, I'm sorry. But it's good to see you again."

"Where have you been all these years?"

"Let's go to the Great Hall," Stoick interrupted. "Hicca can tell her story there."

My lip twitched at the mention of my old name, but I didn't say anything as Stoick began to usher everyone to the Great Hall.

Once inside, my friends and I stood behind the table at the front of the hall. Stoick banged his fist on the table for silence, and I started talking.

I began by telling them all about what happened in Lauri's house when I was seven. How her sons and I discovered her mutilated body, and how we saw the creature that did that to her. There were mutters of disbelief throughout the hall, but I ignored them for now.

Then I told them about the Gate I found when I was eight. I told them about Mortem, my second home—or my real home, for that matter. I told them about how I hunted monsters, and that I was good at it. I told them about how I started bringing Toothless with me on my hunting trips.

"Now about the battle with the Red Death." I frowned as I thought back. "I'm really unclear about what happened there, I wasn't exactly coherent. After the dragon hit the ground and started exploding, Toothless's tailfin burned off and we lost all control. We got struck by the spiked tail, and it knocked me out. When I woke up . . . we had somehow been thrown back into Mortem. I don't know how." I looked up at the crowd. They were all staring at me with rapt attention. "I suffered several injuries, including a cracked skull, five broken ribs, and several burns and lacerations on various places all over my body. Oh, and there was this." I hopped up on the table and swung my legs around so that they dangled off the edge, where the crowd could see them. I reached down and pulled off my left boot, revealing my metal prosthetic.

Gasps and whispers rippled through the hall as they all took in my new leg. Stoick's face turned white. "Oh, Hicca . . ."

I ignored him and continued. "I looked for the Gate that would bring me back here, but it was gone. But in all honesty, even if it had still been there, I probably wouldn't have come back." I paused as whispers flitted through the crowd. "I stayed in Mortem and made a life for myself. I got a job, and I expanded my monster-hunting business. I learned to take care of myself. I made a new family, who are my very wonderful friends here," I motioned to Niko, Maddy, and Juliet. "I also changed my name. I mean, come on, 'Hicca the Useless'?" I gave Stoick a glare before turning my attention back to the villagers. "I don't want to sound like a bitch right now, but I would greatly appreciate it if you would call me Xinia from now on."

" 'Greatly appreciate' meaning she'll break your nose like she did Astro's," Snotlout piped up helpfully. Astro waved sheepishly at the crowd as all eyes turned to him. He'd cleaned the blood up, but his nose was still crooked.

"Exactly," I agreed before continuing. "I'm not the person you thought I was. I was never a frightened, weak, \_useless\_ little girl." My voice raised slightly in anger. "As a child, I witnessed more than most adults ever will. I experienced more life-threatening events before nine o'clock than most of you do all day. And yet I put up with all your \_shit.\_ Calling me names, degrading me, making my life \_hell\_ every single day. And I never said a word. And you!" I rounded on Stoick. "All my life I tried to make you proud. But all you ever did was brush me aside, ignore me. Every time you looked at me I could tell \_exactly\_ what you were thinking: That I was such a disappointment. Nothing but another mouth to feed. And now you claim to be my \_father?\_ Since \_when?!\_ You were never there for me! Ever! In fact, disowning me, giving me \_this,\_ " I jabbed a finger at the tiny scar under my left eye, "was simply a formality." I glared hard at him. "You stopped being my father a long time ago."

Stoick's eyes filled with tears and he looked away.

Finally I stopped and took a moment to calm myself. Niko put a comforting hand on my shoulder, and Toothless leaned against my legs. I took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, looking back towards my audience. "The only reason I came back was to help you with your demon problem," I said in a quieter voice. "Because as much as I hate this place, it's still where I grew up. It's where my dragon family lives. I also have a conscience, and I don't think I could live with myself if I didn't help." I began pulling my boot back on. "I plan to help save the island and then leave. That's it."

When I was finished there was a long, awkward silence while everyone in the room avoided eye contact with me. Finally I said, "Okay, I'm done now. Y'all are free to go." There was a slight commotion as people began rushing for the door, everyone except Stoick, Gobber, and the teens.

I hopped off the table and turned to face my friends. "Are y'all sure you want to stay here?" I asked.

Maddy sighed with exasperation. "\_Yes,\_ Xi, we are sure!"



I help up my hands in mock surrender. "Okay, damn."

Later, Stoick offered to let me stay in my old room. My friends would be welcome to stay there too.

I considered saying no, but I knew that would be stupid. I might be pissed off, but that was no reason to be an idiot for the sake of my pride. I reluctantly agreed and showed Niko, Maddy, and Juliet where my old house was.

The next few days passed quietly. There was no sign of the pirates Stoick said had visited the island a week ago. I didn't see any signs of demons, either. But everyone remained vigilant, knowing that this was the calm before the storm.

In the meantime I walked around the island to get to know the village again. After my outburst in the Great Hall, most people tried to avoid me at all costs. When they did have to interact with me, they refused to look me in the eye and never said much. But I tried to be friendly to everyone. There was no point in being rude.

The kids, contrary to their parents, would constantly follow me and my friends around. I didn't mind. I liked playing with them. I would let them chase me, always letting them catch me and knock me to the ground, where they proceeded to laugh and climb all over me. They also loved Toothless, who would roll onto his back and let them rub his belly and scratch his chin. I think my interaction with the kids is what helped people become more comfortable around me, and they stopped avoiding me so much.

But it wasn't all sunshine and daisies. Some of the villagers were arrogant and conceited, and they still treated me with contempt. One day, one of the men confronted me about the legitimacy of my story. "There are no such things as \_monsters\_," he snorted. "I think you're lying. You just want us to feel bad for you." He leaned closer. "You're still the same stupid little girl you always were, \_Hicca.\_"

Oh, you have no idea how badly I wanted to wipe that goddamn smirk off his face right there. But I didn't let any anger show on the outside. I simply smiled. "You wanna go? Then let's go."

That confused him, his smirk turned into a frown. "'Go'?"

I sighed. "Fight. It means fight."

"Oh!" His smirk reappeared. "I'll be waiting in the arena."

Several people overheard and word got around the village that there was to be a duel in the arena. When he heard, Stoick ran up to me. "Are you really planning to duel a warrior?" he asked. "That's not a good idea."

I only smiled. "You forget, Stoick," I said pointedly, "I'm a warrior too." Then I turned on my heel and walked away, leaving him with a dumbstruck expression on his face.

A few minutes later I was walking into the arena. I carried my duffel bag filled with weapons, and Niko, Maddy, and Juliet entered behind me. The warrior I was to fight already stood on the other side of the

arena, with three of his comrades standing behind him.

The stands were filled to the brim with a screaming and cheering crowd. Stoick sat at the head of the arena. He stood and looked down at us. "The rules are simple," he boomed over the din of the audience. "Three rounds. There is to be no killing or maiming. You may fight one-on-one or four-on-four. You may use any weapons you want or you may fight with your bare hands. Choose your weapons now!"

Niko and I choose our katanas, and Juliet and Maddy chose not to use a weapon. The corner of my mouth curled in a wicked smile as I thought about what the village was about to witness.

I looked across the arena and saw that all of the warriors had chosen their battle axes.

"Now," Stoick boomed, "How many will fight for round one?"

I looked across at the man who had challenged me. He raised one finger. I nodded and also raise one finger.

"One-on-one!" Stoick announced. The rest of our teams both stood back and lowered their weapons as I and my opponent approached each other. Stoick raised his arms. "Round one, begin!" Somewhere, a horn sounded, and we began to circle one another.

My opponent didn't wait long. He rushed forward, raising his axe above his head. I sidestepped easily, and he stumbled past me. He whirled around and growled. He charged again, and this time I swung my katana up and slashed at the handle of his battleaxe. Splinters flew, and the metal head clanged to the ground.

The warrior stared at the broken shaft of wood in his hand with a dumbfuddled expression. Then, snarling, he tossed the shaft aside and turned to me, cracking his knuckles. I shrugged and also tossed aside my sword, taking on a defensive stance.

He rushed at me without preamble. I stayed where I was until the last minute, and when he was about to bowl me over I grabbed his belt and body-slammed him to the ground. I pinned him down on his stomach, twisting his arm behind his back while holding his head down. I let him scream for a minute, his arm on the brink of snapping. Then I grabbed a fistful of his hair, raised his head, and smashed his face into the stone floor, similar to what I'd done to Astro. He was barely conscience, but I leaned down towards his ear and growled, "That's for being an enormous bag of dicks."

Finally I released him and backed up. The horn sounded again. "Round one goes to Xinia!" Stoick announced. He was met with a roar of approval from the crowd.

After about a minute, my opponent hauled himself to his feet. Blood streamed from his nose. He spat in my direction. I only raised an eyebrow at him. He cursed and stumbled back towards his team.

"How many will fight for round two?" Stoick asked us. This time it was to be four-on-four.

"Round two, begin!" The horn sounded. As soon as the two teams began

approaching each other, Maddy and Juliet shifted into their consecutive forms.

There was a collective gasp from the crowd, and then relative silence. Maddy raised her hackles and growled, her amber eyes containing a fiery glow. Juliet spread her white wings to their fullest, making her look both bigger and more beautiful. Both cast a rather impressive figure.

It was my turn to smirk at the opposition as they all stared, slack-jawed. But they were Vikings, and they quickly swallowed their fear and began approaching, raising their weapons as they did so.

Juliet rose into the air and flapped her wings hard at the other team. The result was a powerful gust of wind that knocked them all to the ground. Maddy lunged forward and leapt on top of one of the warriors. She pinned him down and grabbed his throat in her jawsâ€”but she didn't puncture the skin. She simply rested her teeth on his neck and let him sweat.

At the same time, Niko and I charged forward and attacked two separate men. Juliet swooped down and grabbed the last guy by the throat and threw him against the wall.

Needless to say, the fight was over pretty quickly.

"Round two goes to Xinia's team!"

There wasn't even a round three. The other team was too beat up and scared to take us on again, and no one else in the village wanted to challenge us either. After that, we gained more respect around the village.

On the fourth day of my return to Berk, Iepetus's minions came back to Berk for Stoick's answer on whether he would surrender or not.

The one called Mace arrived at the docks on a longboat, along with his two backup men. Their ship remained anchored about a quarter of a mile from Berk.

"Have you an answer for my master?" Mace asked Stoick. The chief raised his chin and looked him in the eye. "I do. The answer is no."

Mace's eyebrows rose. "Are you sure? That is not a wise choice."

"We said no." I stepped up beside Stoick, my hand resting on the butt of my gun. "So leave."

Mace's eyebrows rose further. "And who is this?"

"Someone who'll kick your fat ass nine ways to Sunday if you don't get it off this island."

He tilted his head in curiosity. "You are in interesting one. Alright, we leave for nowâ€”but trust me when I say: We will be back. And in the meantime, we'll have a few surprises for you." With that, he and his men went back to their ship and they sailed

away.

Gobber gave me a weird look. " 'Kick your fat ass nine ways to Sunday'," he repeated slowly. "You have an interesting diplomatic approach."

I grinned. "I learned from my boss."

"Mr. Anderson?" Maddy asked.

"Yeah. He cusses a blue streak every five minutes."

**\*\*Please review! \*\***

## 9. Chapter 9

**\*\*In answer to idea . get the (I had to space out the name, because otherwise it wouldn't show up) question-sorry, I didn't get the full question until now-when Toothless shape-shifts, it's not just an illusion. His organs and tissues are physically shirking and rearranging, and he can't breathe fire unless he's in his full dragon form. And I would also like to thank for your weapons advice, I found it pretty interesting. You'll find that in this chapter I used one of your suggestions, and I may just use more of them in the future :) \*\***

**\*\*And Hicca/Xinia did not lose her virginity to Niko. She's known him since she was eight or nine, back when she first got to America. He's like her big brother; there is no sexual attraction between them. Xinia/Hicca lost her virginity when she had a random one night stand with a stranger she met when she was sixteen. He's the one who popped her cherry.\*\***

**\*\*Anyway, thanks to everyone else who has been reviewing, any and all feedback is always helpful.\*\***

On the fourth day of my return to Berk, the first wave of attack came.

It was dusk, when most people had finished up their duties around the village and were inside their houses. Toothless and I were perched on the roof of the Great Hall, and Niko sat next to us with his legs dangling off the edge. Juliet and Maddy were circling the village to make sure nothing could sneak up on us. And everything was fine—until Maddy flew in out of nowhere and crashed into a house.

"What the hell?" both Niko and I said at the same time. Toothless took off the roof and we landed next to Maddy. She had hit the east wall and crumpled to the ground. My heart stopped when I saw the blood. "Maddy!" I turned her over. "Talk to me!" By this time Niko had caught up to us, and several villagers had started coming over.

Maddy's eyes were closed. She had blood smeared down the side of her face from a head injury, and deep claw marks were slashed across her left shoulder blade and down her arm. "Get me a healer!" I roared and the people behind me. I yanked off my coat and used it to put pressure on her arm. Maddy's eyes fluttered open, but remained glazed

and distant. "Cerberus," she muttered.

I didn't know what she meant by that. But I didn't have time to ask, because Juliet flew up and hovered in the air above us. "Get her inside!" she shouted. "Something bad is coming!"

I didn't ask questions. I simply scooped her up and ran to Gothi's house, where the old woman was waiting for me. She waved me inside and pointed to a bed where I could set Maddy down. I wanted to stay, but Gothi pushed me out and there was nothing I could do about it.

Running back outside, I got another shock. A whole Pack of werewolves were running rampant around the village, attacking anything that moved. The villagers had their weapons out and were fighting back. Juliet was helping them, along with the dragons. And the two-headed wolf—the one I guessed was called Cerberus—I'd met just before leaving Mortem, and whom I'd thought Juliet killed, was fighting Niko.

I didn't even think. I just drew a knife from my calf sheath and ran to help Niko.

I came up behind the two, neither of which saw me approaching. I dodged a slash from Niko's sword and threw myself onto the broad back, holding on to the black fur with a one-handed death grip. The other hand had designs of its own. The serrated blade lodged in the creature's spine just above the bunch and swell of his back legs. Wolves were durable as hell, but a parted spinal cord would still give one second thoughts.

Speaking of second, that was hardly my only knife. I planted the next one midway up the back. With no idea where the spinal column split off, I was more than willing to work my way up. And with more time I would have, but the split second of surprise that had frozen the two-headed wolf passed and I was tossed off in an explosion of muscles, fur, and madness.

My plan hadn't worked; at least not completely. I hadn't sliced the cord, only nicked it, and I had my doubts that was going to do the job. Now, with one back leg hanging uselessly, Cerberus turned his attention from Niko to me.

I barely saw the motion that took me down. I wasn't stupid enough to shove my arm in either mouth of this wolf. I'd end up armless. Instead, I put my faith, such as it was, in my last blade. The creature landed on me, his weight driving that blade into one neck. Blood immediately frothed forth in a pulsing arc. I'd hit a carotid artery.

From one bubbling throat to another, I yanked the knife free and sliced again. I couldn't tell if I hit the artery that time. Already awash in blood and crushed beneath five hundred pounds of lycanthrope, I continued to slash blindly.

Abruptly, the weight increased and what little air I had in my lungs was forced out. I fought against the choking bands of suffocation, tasting the wolf's blood as it fell onto my face and lips. Slashing again with the knife, I heard through ringing ears a human voice screaming over me. Niko was still in the game. Subtract the added

suffocation and that could've been and good thing. Then the weight on me suddenly vanished and I could breathe again.

Dragging air back into my lungs, I pushed myself up and looked around for the rolling ball of bestial violence. I watched Niko standing over Cerberus. He swung his sword high and the wolf became as singular as he'd always considered himself to be. One heavy head was impaled, the metal length punching through skull, brain, and jaw and into the ground below.

Cerberus reared up, ripping the sword that pinned the head of his deceased twin free from the dirt. The glitter of silver piercing the dangling head was brighter than the rapidly dulling eyes. Blood and brain matter dripped from the loll of dead tongue. Cerberus was dead. Long live Cerberus . . . but how exactly long was long? Not only was his back leg hanging useless, but the front one on the same side had stopped moving as well. What I'd started with my knife, Niko had added to with his sword. Each head controlled its side of the body, and now half that body was dead.

The solitary howl of pain and loss was followed by one of unadulterated murderous fury. What remained of the wolf might not have much time left to him, but was going to make the most of it. He spun on one back leg and propelled his mass towards us. It was an unbalanced rush, but powerful as freight train just the same. Nik, who had landed lightly beside me after being bucked free of Cerberus, murmured matter-of-factly, "Do him the mercy."

It would be an act of mercy. Did he deserve mercy? Doubtful, very goddamn doubtful. It didn't matter; I gave it to him anyway.

I dropped the knife in my right hand and drew the .50 Magnum I had in my shoulder holster, firing four rounds into his skull. It was amazing what you could accomplish with the luxury of aim and a handheld cannon. Bone disintegrated, flesh peeled away in chunks, and a giant fell. A look of incomprehension flickered in the black eyes and then died along with Cerberus.

"We should torch his ass later," I muttered darkly, watching the ruined heads roll towards each other, and rest forehead to shattered forehead.

Niko looked me up and down, then zeroed in on my gore-covered face with a concerned frown. "Is any of that yours?"

"No, believe it or not." Putting the gun away, I started to swipe a sleeve across my face. "Miracles do happen."

Suddenly another body of fur slammed into me and clamped my arms in a painful grip—but this time it was just Stoick. His eyes roamed over my bloodied face, growing wide in horror. "Hicca!" he cried, thinking the mess was mine.

"Calm down, I'm fine." I dislodged his grip on my arms and whirled around to aim at a wolf. His brains splattered. "We have to take care of the rest of these guys."

It took the better part of an hour to kill the rest of the Pack. When all was said and done, a few healers ran around tending to the injured. Luckily, no one lost life or limb this time.

Toothless landed next to me and gave me a once-over, checking to make sure I was okay. I did the same for him. At the same time, the teens had come over and were staring at my face with open mouths. "I really need to get this shit off," I muttered to myself, and began vigorously wiping away with my sleeves.

Niko chortled. "You're only making it worse."

I stopped and held out my sleeves to look at them. "Gah, fuck this," I spat.

"Go clean up," Niko told me. "I'll go check on Maddy."

"Fine. I'll come find you later. Toothless, you go help Juliet and make sure all the wolves are gone."

"Why don't you come inside?" Stoick offered. "I can help you clean up."

I considered saying no, because I really didn't want to be around him. But I knew I shouldn't be petty, so I walked with him back to the house. Alone.

It was the first time since I'd come back that I was actually alone with Stoick. And it was awkward. Really, really, awkward.

Stoick set a pot of water over the fire, and once the water was warm I dipped a washcloth in it and wrung it out. I started to raise it to my face, but Stoick touched my wrist. "I'll do it," he said quietly, almost tentatively.

I let him take the cloth and sat on the kitchen table trying not to fidget as he cleaned the gore off my face. And as he did, I suddenly felt like a little kid again. This was the first real affection Stoick had shown me since . . . well, ever.

I didn't realize my eyes were full of tears until they had spilled over and were trickling down my cheeks.

When Stoick saw, he put the washcloth down and wiped my tears away with his thumbs. He turned my face up to look at him. He touched the scar under my eye, and then he, too, began to weep. "I'm sorry," he said. But this time, there was something more in his voice. "I'm so sorry, Hicca. I know you must hate me . . . and I understand. I do. But please, please . . . give me just one more chance. One more chance to be a father." His voice cracked. "You know, that day you battled the Red Death, when you were in the saddle and I was running up behind you . . . I wasn't trying to stop you."

I frowned. "You weren't?"

"No. No, in fact . . . I was trying to apologize. I was going to tell you that I'd made a mistake. A big mistake. I was going to tell you that I'm proud to call you my daughter."

More tears found their way out of my eyes.

"I love you, Hicca."

And I broke down. I threw myself into my father's arms and squeezed him. I'd finally gotten the one thing I'd wanted all these years, without even realizing I wanted it. My father embraced me and I had never been happier in my life.

\*\*Sorry this chapter was so short. I mostly wanted to get Hicca/Xinia and Stoick to make up. I hope you guys are enjoying this so far. Please review! \*\*

\*\*Oh, and one other thing: There is a ghoul living under my bed named Steve. He won't leave. So if I don't post a chapter within a month, he probably ate me.\*\*

## 10. Chapter 10

\*\*My cat is fapping in the corner. \*\*

Living on Berk was much more pleasant ever since I'd found my father again. He was the only one who called me Hicca, and I didn't mind. Now whenever he said it, it felt more like an actual name than an insult.

Maddy was fine. After I'd gotten cleaned up, I'd run to Gothi's house to meet Niko and see how she was doing. When I got there, Maddy was already up and talking to Niko while a healer finished bandaging her arm. "Are you okay?" I asked.

"Yeah, I'm good." She grinned. "I'm a werewolf, remember?"

I punched her uninjured arm. "You scared the shit outta me! What happened?"

"Juliet and I were circling the village, and we heard something in the woods. Then Cerberus—the two-headed wolf Niko tells me y'all killed—busted up out of nowhere and punched me in the head. He went to rip my heart out, and when I tried to roll out of the way he clawed me across the back and down my arm. Then he just picked me up and chucked me like a friggin' baseball."

I frowned. "How did you know who the Alpha was?"

Maddy scoffed. "Are you kidding? He was like the king of all wolves! He's infamous for the way he handles his anger. Meaning he'll take it out on his own Pack members. And it's damned near impossible to kill him."

"Yeah, Juliet and I figured that out the hard way." I looked back at the dead Alpha. "We need to torch his corpse to make sure he stays dead this time."

After the villagers had helped us get all the dead wolves piled up in one big heap, with Cerberus on the bottom, the dragons set fire to them. Several people started playing music and dancing around in the firelight. Apparently they didn't think it was weird that their bonfire was being fueled by rotting corpses.

We didn't know when the next attack would come, so everyone stayed alert with a healthy dose of paranoia. No one went anywhere alone or without a weapon. But at the same time, we tried to keep the mood



relatively light. The way I saw it, if we were going to die tomorrow, why not have fun today?

I went flying with Toothless every chance I got. I never went far, in case Berk was attacked again, but it was fun all the same.

My friends and I sparred a lot for practice. We'd go down to the arena and take turns against each other, lots of times drawing a crowd. A few times the Berkian teens would ask to spar with us. They got whooped every time.

Then the next attack came six days later. This time it was a flock of phoenixes. The way you've probably heard the story is that a phoenix is a beautiful, benign bird that bursts into flames when it dies, and is reborn from the ashes. And that's usually trueâ€”at least the benign part. But what you don't know is that a phoenix usually takes the form of a human. They can burn anything they touch to ash in an instant, and they will only be reborn from their ashes if they died of old age, when they're scheduled to start the cycle over again.

But these phoenixes were different. For one, there was a group of about twenty altogether. Phoenixes never live together in flocksâ€”that's why there isn't another word for a group of phoenixes. And they were obviously out for blood, with the way they were going around burning everything they could get their hands on. It was hard as hell to kill them all.

Shit, what \_isn't\_ hard to kill?

The third attack came just three nights after that. I was making my rounds around the village, sometime around midnight. Toothless was perched on the roof of the Great Hall where he could see the entire village, and he would alert me anytime he saw something suspicious.

I turned when I heard Toothless growl a warning. I looked across the village square towards the woodsâ€”and directly into the eyes of a hellhound.

Two orbs, swirling with the crimson of blood and the black of nightmares, sucked me in. I couldn't look away as those eyes leeches away my soul and showed me my deepest, darkest fears. I was frozen. Try as I might, I couldn't make a grab for my gun or my sword. Bile crawled up the back of my throat.

And then Toothless fired a plasma blast straight into the hound's face.

My shoulders sagged and I sucked in a gulp of air. I shook my head to clear it, then drew my sword. Hellhounds burst forth from the woods. They were bigger than any werewolf. Huge masses of dark fur and fury ravaged the village, tearing into the walls of homes and aiming to rip the villagers to shreds.

"Don't look in their eyes!" I screamed. "Don't look in their eyes!"

I swung my katana with all my might at a passing hound, and felt metal bite into flesh. The hound whirled around and lunged for my

throat, but my reflexes took over and I rolled out of the way. I leapt into the air, hoping to bring the blade down on the base of the skull, but the hound was also quick. It skidded out of the way and turned to face me. Saliva dripped from teeth that would make a Thunderdrum shudder. I drew the Magnum I'd used on Cerberus and fired. Supposedly the gun could take down a bear. A bear didn't have shit on a hellhound, but it was worth a shot.

Fucking puns.

By some miracle, I managed to hit the hellhound in the eye after it dodged off to the side. The thing let out one yelp of pain, but that was it. It still charged towards me with murder in its remaining eye.

This time I drew my Desert Eagle, loaded with explosive rounds. Round one tore a twelve inch hole through the massive throat. Round two carved another foot-wide gap in its chest, right next to where its heart was. I didn't get a chance to let loose round three. The thing was still coming for me, regardless of its wounds, and was about to tear my organs out.

But suddenly, another black shape came down from the sky and snatched me out of the way with a pair of familiar paws. They tossed me up and over, and I automatically twisted in the air so that I landed perfectly in Toothless's saddle. I jammed my prosthetic into the pedal and we shot upwards with the speed of a bullet.

Once we were several hundred feet in the air, I redirected our path of flight. We began to fall back towards the earth, Toothless turning to face the rapidly approaching island. I felt his back heat up and vibrate as fire began to grow in his throat. He let loose a plasma blast into a group of hellhounds. The beasts went flying into the air, and hit the ground either dead or too injured to move.

Toothless had to be careful when firing in such close proximity to the villagers. Each time he fired, he had to perfectly calculate the shots in order to make sure he didn't hit a house or a person.

It soon became clear to everyone else that we weren't going to be able to kill the hellhounds with anything but the dragons. Oddly enough, fire is one of a hellhound's main weaknesses. Not that they have many weaknesses.

A few homes caught fire, and that was unfortunate, but there wasn't anything we could do about it until every hound had been eradicated. That took all night.

This time we lost a few people. There was a funeral ceremony the next morning for two men, a woman, and three children. Children. How evil was Iepetus that he had no reservations about killing young children who had barely even gotten their life started?

But we didn't get long to mourn, because the real attacks came the next day.

The alarm was raised when a sentry spotted a ship on the horizon. Then two ships. Then three. Then a dozen.

Panic ravaged the village, people ran everywhere, looking for their families, their dragons, hiding their children. But Stoick managed to regain control and ordered that those not fit to fight be barricaded in the Great Hall. There was a mass basement-type area built underneath the Hall, which had originally been placed in case of some natural disaster. Now it would be used as a panic room.

Once the young, weak, and old had been led to the safety of the panic room, the warriors rallied together to wait for the demon army to arrive.

**\*\*Please don't hate me!\*\***

**\*\*I'm so sorry this chapter was short and kinda shitty. It's so hard to find time to write. I have all HONORS and AP classes, and I also take violin lessons every week, so that means lots and lots of homework and projects and practice sessions, and sometimes the creative area of my brain gets burnt out when I'm writing. But I'm trying my best! I promise! \*gives everyone free cookies\*\***

#### 11. IMPORTANT, PLEASE READ

**\*\*I really don't want to do this . . . but I'm afraid I'm going to have to discontinue this story. My writer's block hasn't budged an inch, and I just can't think of any way to keep this going. It's not fair to you guys to keep stringing you along. I'm really, really, sorry; I wish I didn't have to do this. \*\***

**\*\*But I am willing to give this story to someone if any of you are interested in taking over this. So, if you are interested (and if you're a good writer) just PM me.\*\***

**\*\*I've still got two more stories (The Nightmare's Grip and The Dragon Gem) going, though, and I'm doing my best to get those done. I do have a life outside of FanFiction, so please don't get mad at me if I'm slow on updating. \*\***

**\*\*Anyway, I love you guys, all of you are amazing, and I wish you well!\*\***

#### 12. Adoption Update

**\*\*This story has been adopted by \*\*\*\*nightfly123\*\*\*\*! Go check him/her out, s/he's a really great writer.\*\***

End  
file.